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ABSTRACT

This guide, a workbook and reader, is about communicating more cooperatively. The guide outlines a structured, intensive exploration of seven challenging skills for a lifetime of better communication--listening and talking--in work, family, friendship, and community. It is divided into the following sections: Introduction; Challenge One: Listening More Carefully and Responsively; Challenge Two: Explaining Your Conversational Intent and Inviting Consent; Challenge Three: Expressing Yourself More Clearly and Completely; Challenge Four: Translating Complaints and Criticisms into Requests; Challenge Five: Asking Questions More "Open-Endedly" and More Creatively; Challenge Six: Expressing More Appreciation; and Challenge Seven: Making Better Communication an Important Part of Everyday Living. All the "Challenge" sections contain exercises and/or readings. Appended are an 11-item annotated bibliography of recommended books on interpersonal communication and suggestions for starting a cooperative communication skills peer support group. (Contains 40 notes.) (NKA)

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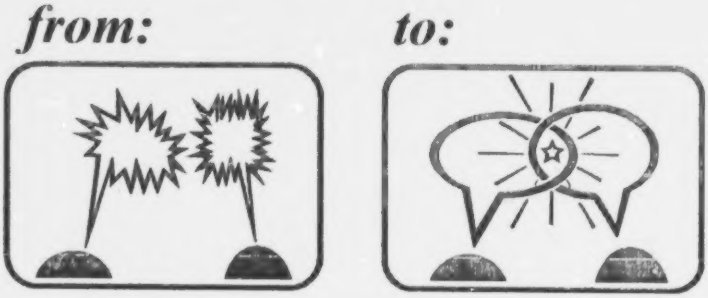

The Seven Challenges

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A Workbook and Reader
About Communicating More Cooperatively

a structured, intensive exploration
of seven challenging skills
for a lifetime of better communication
in work, family, friendship & community

Dennis Rivers, M.A.

Second Edition -- August, 2001

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and those like him in every faith.
Where there is a clash of wills
may we bring a meeting of hearts.

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Thanks for all the many sustaining gifts
of wisdom, labor, love and money
that have made this workbook possible.

The author of this workbook, Dennis Rivers, gratefully accepts gifts of any amount in support the continuing development and free distribution of this workbook and related teaching materials. (As noted above, this workbook is available online in PDF format free of charge at www.coopcomm.org)

Every supporting gift makes a big difference. A ten-dollar gift, for example, can fund the free distribution of approximately one thousand copies of this workbook, often to schools and community service organizations that would not otherwise be able to provide such material to their students/participants.

Please make your check or money order payable to Dennis Rivers and mail it to the address shown below. Thank you helping to make this workbook a global resource for better interpersonal communication.

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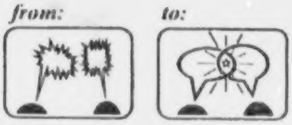

The Seven Challenges

A Workbook and Reader About Communicating More Cooperatively

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Introduction

HOW THIS WORKBOOK CAME TO BE, MY QUEST FOR THE SEVEN CHALLENGES, AND HOW WE BENEFIT FROM A MORE COOPERATIVE STYLE OF LISTENING AND TALKING

Searching for what is most important. This workbook proposes seven ways to guide your conversations in directions that are more satisfying for both you and your conversation partners. I have selected these suggestions from the work of a wide range of communication teachers, therapists and researchers in many fields. While these seven skills are not *all* a person needs to know about talking, listening and resolving conflicts, I believe they are a large and worthwhile chunk of it, and a great place to begin.

The interpersonal communication field suffers from a kind of "embarrassment of riches." There is so much good advice out there that I doubt than any one human being could ever follow it all. To cite just one example of many, in the early 1990s communication coach Kare Anderson wrote a delightful book[1] about negotiation that included one hundred specific ways to get more of what you want. The problem is that no one I know can carry on a conversation and juggle one hundred pieces of advice in his or her mind at the same time.

So lurking behind all that good advice is the issue of priorities: What is most important to focus on? What kinds of actions will have the most positive effects on people's lives? This workbook is my effort to answer those questions. My goal is to summarize what many agree are the most important principles of good interpersonal communication, and to describe these principles in ways that make them easier to remember, easier to adopt and easier to weave together. Much of the information in this workbook has been known for decades, but that does not mean that everyone has been able to benefit from it. This workbook is my contribution toward closing that gap.

How we benefit from learning and using a more cooperative style. I have selected for this workbook the seven most powerful, rewarding and challenging steps I have discovered in my own struggle to connect with people and heal the divisions in my family. None of this came naturally to me, as I come from a family that includes people who did not talk to one another for decades at a time. The effort is bringing me some of each of the good results listed below (and I am still learning). These are the kinds of benefits that are waiting to be awakened by the magic wand... of your study and practice.

Get more done, have more fun, which could also be stated as better coordination of your life activities with the life activities of the people who are important to you. Living and working with others are *communication-intensive* activities. The better we understand what other people are feeling and wanting, and the more clearly others understand our goals and feelings, the easier it will be to make sure that everyone is pulling in the same direction.

More respect. Since there is a lot of mutual imitation in everyday communication (I raise my voice, you raise your voice, etc.), when we adopt a more compassionate and respectful attitude toward our conversation partners, we invite and influence them to do the same toward us.

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[1] Kare Anderson, *Getting What You Want.* New York: Dutton. 1993.

More influence. When we practice the combination of responsible honesty and attentiveness recommended here, we are more likely to engage other people and reach agreements that everyone can live with, we are more likely to get what we want, and for reasons we won't regret later.[2]

More comfortable with conflict. Because each person has different talents, there is much to be gained by people working together, and accomplishing together what none could do alone. But because each person also has different needs and views, there will always be some conflict in living and working with others. By understanding more of what goes on in conversations, we can become better team problem solvers and conflict navigators. Learning to listen to others more deeply can increase our confidence that we will be able to engage in a dialogue of genuine give and take, and be able to help generate problem solutions that meet more of everyone's needs.

More peace of mind. Because every action we take toward others reverberates for months (or years) inside our own minds and bodies, adopting a more peaceful and creative attitude in our interaction with others can be a significant way of lowering our own stress levels. Even in unpleasant situations, we can feel good about our own skillful responses.

More satisfying closeness with others. Learning to communicate better will get us involved with exploring two big questions: "What's going on inside of me?" and "What's going on inside of you?" Modern life is so full of distractions and entertainments that many people don't know their own hearts very well, nor the hearts of others nearby. Exercises in listening can help us listen more carefully and reassure our conversation partners that we really do understand what they are going through. Exercises in self-expression can help us ask for what we want more clearly and calmly.

A healthier life. In his book, *Love and Survival*,[3] Dr. Dean Ornish cites study after study that point to supportive relationships as a key factor in helping people survive life-threatening illnesses. To the degree that we use cooperative communication skills to both give and receive more emotional support, we will greatly enhance our chances of living longer and healthier lives.

Respecting the mountain we are about to climb together: why learning to talk and listen in new ways is challenging. I hope putting these suggestions into practice will surprise you with delightful and heartfelt conversations you never imagined were possible, just as I was surprised. And at the same time, I do not want to imply that learning new communication skills is easy.

I wish the skills I describe in this workbook could be presented as "Seven Easy Ways to Communicate Better." But in reality, the recommendations that survived my sifting and ranking demand a lot of effort. Out of respect for you, I feel the need to tell you that making big, positive changes in the way you communicate with others will probably be one of the most satisfying and most difficult tasks you will ever take on, akin to climbing Mt. Everest. If I misled you into assuming these changes were easy to make, you would be vulnerable to becoming discouraged by the first steep slope. Forewarned of the amount of effort involved, you can plan for the long climb. My deepest hope is that if you understand the following four reasons why learning new communication skills is challenging, that understanding will help you to be more patient and more forgiving with yourself and others.

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[2] Thanks to communication skills teacher Dr. Marshall Rosenberg for this pithy saying.

[3] Dean Ornish, MD, *Love and Survival*. New York: HarperCollins. 1998. Chap. 2.

First of all, learning better communication skills requires a lot of effort because cooperation between people is a much more complex and mentally demanding process than coercing, threatening or just grabbing what you want. The needs of two people (or many) are involved rather than just the needs of one. And thinking about the wants of two people (and how those wants might overlap) is a giant step beyond simply feeling one's own wants.[4]

The journey from fighting over the rubber ducky to learning how to share it is the longest journey a child will ever make, a journey that leads far beyond childhood. Reaching this higher level of skill and fulfillment in living and working with others requires effort, conscious attention, and practice with other people.

A second reason that learning more effective and satisfying communication skills does not happen automatically is that our way of communicating with others is deeply woven into our personalities, into the history of our hearts. For example, if, when I was little, someone slapped me across the face or yelled at me every time I spoke up and expressed a want or opinion, then I probably would have developed a very sensible aversion to talking about what I was thinking or feeling. It may be true that no one is going to hit me now, but a lot of my brain cells may not know that yet. So learning new ways of communicating gets us involved in learning new ways of feeling in and feeling about all our relationships with people. We can become more confident and less fearful, more skillful and less clumsy, more understanding of others and less threatened by them. Changes as significant as these happen over months and years rather than in a single weekend.

A third side of the communications mountain concerns self-observation. In the course of living our attention is generally pointed out toward other people and the world around us. As we talk and joke, comfort others and negotiate with them, we are often lost in the flow of interaction. Communicating more cooperatively involves exerting a gentle influence to guide conversations toward happier endings for all the participants. But in order to guide or steer an unfolding process, a person needs to be able to observe that process. So communicating more cooperatively and more satisfyingly requires that we learn how to participate in our conversations and observe them at the very same time! It takes a while to grow into this participating and observing at the same time. At first we look back on conversations that we have had and try to understand what went well and what went badly. Gradually we can learn to bring that observing awareness into our conversations.

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[4] I am grateful to the books of developmental psychologist Robert Kegan, *The Evolving Self* and *In Over Our Heads: The Mental Demands of Modern Life*, (both Harvard Univ. Press) for introducing me to the idea that cooperation is more mentally demanding than coercion. After that idea, nothing in human communication looked the same.

A final reason (four is surely enough) that learning new communication skills takes effort is that we are surrounded by a flood of bad examples. Every day movies and TV offer us a continuing stream of vivid images of sarcasm, fighting, cruelty, fear and mayhem. And as beer and cigarette advertisers have proven beyond a shadow of a doubt, you can get millions of people to do something if you just show enough vivid pictures of folks already doing it. So at some very deep level we are being educated by the mass media to fail in our relationships.[5] For every movie about people making peace with one another, there seem to be a hundred movies about people hacking each other to death with chainsaws or literally kicking one another in the face, which are not actions that will help you or me solve problems at home or at the office. Learning to relate to others generally involves following examples, but our examples of interpersonal skill and compassion are few and far between.

These are the reasons that have led me to see learning new communication skills as a demanding endeavor. My hope is that you will look at improving your communication skills as a long journey, like crossing a mountain range, so that you will feel more like putting effort and attention into the process, and thus will get more out of it. Living a fully human life is surprisingly similar to playing baseball or playing the violin. Getting better at each requires continual practice. You probably already accept this principle in relation to many human activities. I hope this workbook will encourage and support you in applying it to your own talking, listening and asking questions.

Seven ways of being the change you want to see. Because conversations are a bringing together of both persons' contributions, when you initiate a positive change in your way of talking and listening, you can single-handedly begin to change the quality of all your conversations. The actions described in this work-book are seven examples of "being the change you want to see" (a saying I recently saw attributed to Mahatma Gandhi, the great teacher of nonviolence).

You can "single-handedly" change the quality of your conversations

While this may sound very idealistic and self-sacrificing, you can also understand it as a practical principle: model the behavior you want to evoke from other people. The Seven Challenges are also examples of another saying of Gandhi's: "the means are the ends." Communicating more awarely and compassionately can be satisfying ends in themselves, both emotionally and spiritually. They also build happier families and more successful businesses.

A brief summary of each challenge is given in the paragraphs that follow, along with some of the lifelong issues of personal development that are woven through each one. In Chapters One through Seven you will find expanded descriptions of each one, with discussions, examples, exercises and readings to help you explore each suggestion in action.

Challenge 1. Listen more carefully and responsively. Listen first and acknowledge what you hear, even if you don't agree with it, before expressing your experience or point of view. In order to get more of your conversation partner's attention in tense situations, pay attention first: listen and give a brief restatement of what you have heard (especially feelings) before you express your own needs or position. The kind of listening recommended here separates acknowledging from approving or agreeing. Acknowledging another person's thoughts and feelings **does not have to mean** that you **approve of** or **agree with** that person's actions or way of experiencing, or that you will do whatever someone asks.

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[5] For an extended examination of this issue, see Sissela Bok, *Mayhem: Violence as Public Entertainment.* Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley. 1998.

⊠ Some of the deeper levels of this first step include learning to listen to your own heart, and learning to encounter identities and integrities quite different from your own, while still remaining centered in your own sense of self.

Challenge 2. Explain your conversational intent and invite consent. In order to help your conversation partner cooperate with you and to reduce possible misunderstandings, start important conversations by inviting your conversation partner to join you in the specific kind of conversation you want to have. The more the conversation is going to mean to you, the more important it is for your conversation partner to understand the big picture. Many successful communicators begin special conversations with a preface that goes something like: *"I would like to talk with you for a few minutes about [subject matter]. When would be a good time?"* The exercise for this step will encourage you to expand your list of possible conversations and to practice starting a wide variety of them.

⊠ Some deeper levels of this second step include learning to be more aware of and honest about your intentions, gradually giving up intentions to injure, demean or punish, and learning to treat other people as consenting equals whose participation in conversation with us is a gift and not an obligation

Challenge 3. Express yourself more clearly and completely. Slow down and give your listeners more information about what you are experiencing by using a wide range of "I-statements." One way to help get more of your listener's empathy is to express more of the five basic dimensions of your experience: Here is an example using the five main "I-messages" identified by various researchers over the past half century: (Please read down the columns.)

The Five I-Messages = Five dimensions of experience	Example of a "Five I-Message" communication
1. What are you seeing, hearing or otherwise sensing?.	"When I saw the dishes in the sink...
2. What emotions are you feeling?	...I felt irritated and impatient...
3. What interpretations or wants of yours that support those feelings?	...because I want to start cooking dinner right away...
4. What action, information or commitment you want to request now?	...and I want to ask you to help me do the dishes right now...
5. What positive results will receiving that action, information or commitment lead to in the future?	...so that dinner will be ready by the time Mike and Joe get here."

Anytime one person sincerely listens to another, a very creative process is going on in which the listener mentally reconstructs the speaker's experience. The more facets or dimensions of your experience you share with easy-to-grasp "I statements," the easier it will be for your conversation partner to reconstruct your experience accurately and understand what you are feeling. This is equally worthwhile whether you are trying to solve a problem with someone or trying to express appreciation for them. Expressing yourself this carefully might appear to take longer than your usual quick style of communication. But if you include all the time it takes to unscramble everyday misunderstandings, and to work through the feelings that usually accompany not being understood, expressing yourself more completely can actually take a lot less time.

⊠ Some deeper levels of this third step include developing the courage to tell the truth, growing beyond blame in understanding painful experiences, and learning to make friends with feelings, your own and other people's, too.

Challenge 4. Translate your (and other people's) complaints and criticisms into specific requests, and explain your requests. In order to get more cooperation from others, whenever possible ask for what you want by using specific, action-oriented, positive language rather than by using generalizations, "why's," "don'ts" or "somebody should's." Help your listeners comply by explaining your requests with a "so that...", "it would help me to... if you would..." or "in order to... ." Also, when you are receiving criticism and complaints from others, translate and restate the complaints as action requests. ....").

⊠ Some of the deeper levels of this fourth step include developing a strong enough sense of self-esteem that you can accept being turned down, and learning how to imagine creative solutions to problems, solutions in which everyone gets at least some of their needs met.

Challenge 5. Ask questions more "open-endedly" and more creatively. ***"Open-endedly...":*** In order to coordinate our life and work with the lives and work of other people, we all need to know more of what other people are feeling and thinking, wanting and planning. But our usual "yes/no" questions actually tend to shut people up rather than opening them up. In order to encourage your conversation partners to share more of their thoughts and feelings, ask "open-ended" rather than "yes/no" questions. Open-ended questions allow for a wide range of responses. For example, asking "How did you like that food/movie /speech/doctor/etc.?" will evoke a more detailed response than "Did you like it?" (which could be answered with a simple "yes" or "no"). In the first part of Challenge Five we explore asking a wide range of open-ended questions.

"and more creatively..." When we ask questions we are using a powerful language tool to *focus conversational attention* and *guide our interaction with others*. But many of the questions we have learned to ask are totally fruitless and self-defeating (such as, parents to a pregnant teen, *"Why???!!! Why have you done this to us???!!!")*. In general it will be more fruitful to ask "how" questions about the future rather than "why" questions about the past, but there are many more creative possibilities as well. Of the billions of questions we might ask, not all are equally fruitful or illuminating; not all are equally helpful in solving problems together. In the second part of Challenge Five we explore asking powerfully creative questions from many areas of life.

⊠ Deeper levels of this fifth step include developing the courage to hear the answers to our questions, to face the truth of what other people are feeling. Also, learning to be comfortable with the process of looking at a situation from different perspectives, and learning to accept that people often have needs, views and tastes different from your own (I am not a bad person if you love eggplant and I can't stand it).

Challenge 6. Express more appreciation. To build more satisfying relationships with the people around you, express more appreciation, delight, affirmation, encouragement and gratitude. Because life continually requires us to attend to problems and breakdowns, it gets very easy to see in life only what is broken and needs fixing. But satisfying relationships (and a happy life) require us to notice and respond to what is delightful, excellent, enjoyable, to work well done, to food well cooked, etc. It is appreciation that makes a relationship strong enough to accommodate differences and disagreements. Thinkers and researchers in several different fields have reached similar conclusions about this: healthy relationships need a core of mutual appreciation.

⊠ One deeper level of this sixth step is in how you might shift your overall level of appreciation and gratitude, toward other people, toward nature, and toward life and/or a "Higher Power."

Challenge 7. Make better communication an important part of your everyday life. In order to have your new communication skills available in a wide variety of situations, you will need to practice them in as wide a variety of situations as possible, until, like driving or bicycling, they become "second nature." The Seventh Challenge is to practice your evolving communication skills in everyday life, solving problems together, giving emotional support to the important people in your life, and enjoying how you are becoming a positive influence in your world. This challenge includes learning to see each conversation as an opportunity to grow in skill and awareness, each encounter as an opportunity to express more appreciation, each argument as an opportunity to translate your complaints into requests, and so on.

⊠ One deeper level of this seventh step concerns learning to separate yourself from the current culture of violence, insult and injury, and learning how to create little islands of cooperation and mutuality.

Conclusion. I hope the information and exercises in this workbook will help you discover that listening and talking more consciously and cooperatively can be fun and rewarding. Just as guitar playing and basketball take great effort and bring great satisfaction, so does communicating more skillfully.

Dennis Rivers

Second Edition
August, 2001

Introduction exercise. Before you continue reading, take some time and write down the ways in which you would like to improve your communication and interaction with others. For example, what are some situations you would like to change with new communication skills?

Challenge One

LISTENING MORE CAREFULLY AND RESPONSIVELY

SUMMARY(repeated from Introduction) Listen first and acknowledge what you hear, even if you don't agree with it, before expressing your experience or point of view. In order to get more of your conversation partner's attention in tense situations, pay attention first: listen and give a brief restatement of what you have heard (especially feelings) before you express your own needs or position. The kind of listening recommended here separates **acknowledging** from **approving** or **agreeing**.[6] Acknowledging another person's thoughts and feelings **does not have to mean** that you **approve of** or **agree with** that person's actions or way of experiencing, or that you will do whatever someone asks.

Challenge 1: listen first & acknowledge

By listening and then repeating back in your own words the essence and feeling of what you have just heard, from the speaker's point of view, you allow the speaker to feel the satisfaction of being understood, (a major human need). Listening responsively is always worthwhile as a way of letting people know that you care about them. Our conversation partners do not automatically know how well we have understood them, and they may not be very good at asking for confirmation. When a conversation is tense or difficult it is even more important to listen first and acknowledge what you hear. Otherwise, your chances of being heard by the other person may be very poor.

Listening to others helps others to listen. In learning to better coordinate our life activities with the life activities of others, we would do well to resist two very popular (but terrible) models of communication: arguing a case in court and debating.[7] In courts and debates, each side tries to make its own points and listens to the other side only to tear down the other side's points. Since the debaters and attorneys rarely have to reach agreement or get anything done together, it doesn't seem to matter how much ill will their conversational style generates. But most of us are in a very different situation. We probably spend most of our lives trying to arrange agreement and cooperative action, so we need to be concerned about engaging people, not defeating them. *In business (and in family life, too) the person we defeat today will probably be the person whose cooperation we need tomorrow!*[8]

When people are upset about something and want to talk about it, their capacity to listen is greatly diminished. Trying to get your point across to a person who is trying to express a strong feeling will usually cause the other person to try even harder to get that emotion recognized. On the other hand, once people feel that their messages and feelings have been heard, they start to relax and they have more attention available for listening. As Marshall Rosenberg reports in his book, *Nonviolent Communication*, "Studies in labor-management negotiations demonstrate that the time required to reach conflict resolution **is cut in half** when each negotiator agrees, before responding, to repeat what the previous speaker had said."[9] (my emphasis)

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[6] While at least some people have probably been listening in this compassionate way over the centuries, it was the late psychologist Carl Rogers who, perhaps more than any other person, advocated and championed this accepting way of being with another person. For a summary of his work see, *On Becoming a Person: A Therapist's View of Psychotherapy*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin. 1995.

[7] For a sobering and inspiring book on this issue, see Deborah Tannen, *The Argument Culture: Moving From Debate to Dialogue*. New York: Random House. 1998.

[8] The now classic work on cooperative negotiation, that includes a strong emphasis on empathic listening, is *Getting to Yes: Negotiating Agreement Without Giving In* (2nd ed.) by Roger Fisher, William Ury and Bruce Patton. New York: Penguin Books. 1991.

For example, in a hospital a nurse might say, after listening to a patient: ***"I hear that you are very uncomfortable right now, Susan, and you would really like to get out of that bed and move around. But your doctor says your bones won't heal unless you stay put for another week."*** The patient in this example is much more likely to listen to the nurse than if the nurse simply said: ***"I'm really sorry, Susan, but you have to stay in bed. Your doctor says your bones won't heal unless you stay put for another week."*** What is missing in this second version is any acknowledgment of the patient's present experience.

The power of simple acknowledging. The practice of responsive listening described here separates ***acknowledging*** the thoughts and feelings that a person expresses from ***approving, agreeing, advising, or persuading.*** Acknowledging another person's thoughts and feelings...

> ...still leaves you the option of agreeing or disagreeing with that person's point of view, actions or way of experiencing.
>
> ...still leaves you with the option of saying yes or no to a request.
>
> ...still leaves you with the option of saying more about the matter being discussed.

One recurring problem in conflict situations is that many people don't separate acknowledging from agreeing. They are joined together in people's minds, somewhat like a two-boxes-of-soap "package deal" in a supermarket. The effect of this is, let us say, that John feels that any acknowledgment of Fred's experience implies agreement and approval, therefore John will not acknowledge any of Fred's experience. Fred tries harder to be heard and John tries harder not to hear. Of course, this is a recipe for stalemate (if not disaster).

People want both: to be understood and acknowledged on the one hand, and to be approved and agreed with, on the other. With practice, you can learn to respond first with a simple acknowledgment. As you do this, you may find that, figuratively speaking, you can give your conversation partners half of what they want, even if you can't give them all of what they want. In many conflict situations that will be a giant step forward. Your conversation partners will also be more likely to acknowledge your position and experience, even if they don't sympathize with you. This mutual acknowledgment can create an emotional atmosphere in which it is easier to work toward agreement or more gracefully accommodate disagreements. Here are three examples of acknowledgments that do not imply agreement:

> Counselor to a drug abuse client: **"I hear that you are feeling terrible right now and that you really want some drugs. And I want you to know that I'm still concerned this stuff you're taking is going to kill you."**

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[9] Marshall B. Rosenberg, *Nonviolent Communication: A Language of Compassion*. Del Mar, CA: PuddleDancer Press. 1999.

> Mother to seven-year-old: **"I know that you want some more cake and ice cream, Jimmy, because it tastes so good, but you've already had three pieces and I'm really worried that you'll get an upset tummy. That's why I don't want you to have any more."**

> Union representative to company owner's representative: **"I understand from your presentation that you see XYZ Company as short of cash, threatened by foreign competition, and not in a position to agree to any wage increases. Now I would like us to explore contract arrangements that would allow my union members to get a wage increase and XYZ Company to advance its organizational goals."**

In each case a person's listening to and acknowledgment of his or her conversation partner's experience or position increases the chance that the conversation partner will be willing to listen in turn. The examples given above are all a bit long and include a declaration of the listener's position or decision. In many conversations you may simply want to reassure your conversation partner with a word or two that you have heard and understood whatever they are experiencing. For example, saying, "You sound really happy [or sad] about that," etc.

As you listen to the important people in your life, give very brief summaries of the experiences they are talking about and name the want or feeling that appears to be at the heart of the experience. For example:

> **"So you were really happy about that..."**

> **"So you drove all the way over there and they didn't have the part they promised you on the phone. What a letdown...**

> **"Sounds like you wanted a big change in that situation..."**

> **"Oh, no! Your dog got run over. You must be feeling really terrible..."**

The point here is to empathize, not to advise. If you added to that last statement, **"That total SLOB!!! You should sue that person who ran over your dog. People need to pay for their mistakes, etc."**, you would be taking over the conversation and also leading the person away from her or his feelings and toward your own.

Other suggestions about listening more responsively:

As a general rule, do not just repeat another person's exact words. Summarize their experience in your own words. But in cases where people actually scream or shout something, sometimes you may want to repeat a few of their exact words in a quiet tone of voice to let them know that you have heard it just as they said it.

If the emotion is unclear, make a tentative guess, as in **"So it sounds like maybe you were a little unhappy about all that..."** The speaker will usually correct your guess if it needs correcting.

Listening is an art and there are very few fixed rules. Pay attention to whether the person speaking accepts your summary by saying things such as "yeah!", "you got it," "that's right," and similar responses.

If you can identify with what the other person is experiencing, then in your tone of voice (as you summarize what another person is going through), express a little of the feeling that your conversation partner is expressing. (Emotionally flat summaries can feel strange and distant.)

Such compassionate listening is a powerful resource for navigating through life, and it also makes significant demands on us as listeners. We may need to learn how to hold our own ground while we restate someone else's position. That takes practice. We also have to be able to listen to people's criticisms or complaints without becoming disoriented or totally losing our sense of self worth. That requires cultivating a deeper sense of self worth, which is no small project. In spite of these difficulties, the results of compassionate, responsive listening have been so rewarding in my life that I have found it to be worth all the effort required.

Real life examples. Here are two brief, true stories about listening. The first is about listening going well and the second is about the heavy price people sometimes pay for not listening in an empathic way.

John Gottman describes his discovery that listening really works: "I remember the day I first discovered how Emotion Coaching [the author's approach to empathic listening] might work with my own daughter, Moriah. She was two at the time and we were on a cross-country flight home after visiting with relatives. Bored, tired, and cranky, Moriah asked me for Zebra, her favorite stuffed animal and comfort object. Unfortunately, we had absentmindedly packed the well-worn critter in a suitcase that was checked at the baggage counter.

"I'm sorry, honey, but we can't get Zebra right now. He's in the big suitcase in another part of the airplane," I explained. "I want Zebra," she whined pitifully.

"I know, sweetheart. But Zebra isn't here. He's in the baggage compartment underneath the plane and Daddy can't get him until we get off the plane. I'm sorry."

"I want Zebra! I want Zebra!" she moaned again. Then she started to cry, twisting in her safety seat and reaching futilely toward a bag on the floor where she'd seen me go for snacks.

"I know you want Zebra," I said, feeling my blood pressure rise. "But he's not in that bag. He's not here and I can't do anything about it. Look, why don't we read about Ernie," I said, fumbling for one of her favorite picture books.

"Not Ernie!" she wailed, angry now. "I want Zebra. I want him NOW!"

By now, I was getting "do something" looks from the passengers, from the airline attendants, from my wife, seated across the aisle. I looked at Moriah's face, red with anger, and imagined how frustrated she must feel. After all, wasn't I the guy who could whip up a peanut butter sandwich on demand? Make huge purple dinosaurs appear with the flip of a TV switch? Why was I withholding her favorite toy from her? Didn't I understand how much she wanted it?

I felt bad. Then it dawned on me: I couldn't get Zebra, but I could offer her the next best thing -- a father's comfort. "You wish you had Zebra now," I said to her. "Yeah," she said sadly.

"And you're angry because we can't get him for you."

"Yeah."

"You wish you could have Zebra right now," I repeated, as she stared at me, looking rather curious, almost surprised. "Yeah," she muttered. "I want him now."

"You're tired now, and smelling Zebra and cuddling with him would feel real good. I wish we had Zebra here so you could hold him. Even better, I wish we could get out of these seats and find a big, soft bed full of all your animals and pillows where we could just lie down." "Yeah," she agreed.

"We can't get Zebra because he's in another part of the airplane," I said. "That makes you feel frustrated." "Yeah," she said with a sigh.

"I'm so sorry," I said, watching the tension leave her face. She rested her head against the back of her safety seat. She continued to complain softly a few more times, but she was growing calmer. Within a few minutes, she was asleep.

Although Moriah was just two years old, she clearly knew what she wanted -- her Zebra. Once she began to realize that getting it wasn't possible, she wasn't interested in my excuses, my arguments, or my diversions. My validation, however, was another matter. Finding out that I understood how she felt seemed to make her feel better. For me, it was a memorable testament to the power of empathy."[10]

Sam Keen describes a friend's lament about the consequences of not listening deeply: "Long ago and far away, I expected love to be light and easy and without failure.

"Before we moved in together, we negotiated a prenuptial agreement. Neither of us had been married before, and we were both involved in our separate careers. So our agreement not to have children suited us both. Until... on the night she announced that her period was late and she was probably pregnant, we both treated the matter as an embarrassing accident with which we would have to deal. Why us? Why now? Without much discussion, we assumed we would do the rational thing -- get an abortion. As the time approached, she began to play with hypothetical alternatives, to ask in a plaintive voice with half misty eyes: 'Maybe we should keep the baby. Maybe we could get a live-in helper, and it wouldn't interrupt our lives too much. Maybe I could even quit my job and be a full-time mother for a few years.'

'Maybe . . .' To each maybe I answered: 'Be realistic. Neither of us is willing to make the sacrifices to raise a child.' She allowed herself to be convinced, silenced the voice of her irrational hopes and dreams, and terminated the pregnancy.

"It has been many years now since our 'decision,' and we are still together and busy with our careers and our relationship. Still no children, even though we have recently been trying to get pregnant. I can't help noticing that she suffers from spells of regret and guilt, and a certain mood of sadness settles over her. At times I know she longs for her missing child and imagines what he or she would be doing now. I reassure her that we did the right thing. But when I see her lingering guilt and pain and her worry that she missed her one chance to become a mother, I feel that I failed an important test of love. Because my mind had been closed to anything that would interrupt my plans for the future, I had listened to her without deep empathy or compassion. I'm no longer sure we made the right decision. I am sure that in refusing to enter into her agony, to share the pain of her ambivalence, I betrayed her.

"I have asked for and, I think, received forgiveness, but there remains a scar that was caused by my insensitivity and self-absorption."[11]

[*Workbook editor's note: I have not included this real life excerpt to make a point for or against abortion. The lesson I draw from this story is that whatever decision this couple made, they would have been able to live with that decision better if the husband had listened in a way that acknowledged all his wife's feelings rather than listening only to argue her out of her feelings. What lesson do you draw from this story?*]

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[10] From *The Heart of Parenting - How to Raise an Emotionally Intelligent Child*, by John M. Gottman with Joan DeClaire. New York: Simon & Schuster. 1997. Pages 69 & 70.

[11] From *To Love and Be Loved*, by Sam Keen. New York: Bantam Books. 1997. Pages 138 & 139.

First exercise for Challenge 1: Active Listening. Find a practice partner. Take turns telling events from your lives. As you listen to your practice partner, sum up your practice partner's overall experience and feelings in brief responses during the telling:

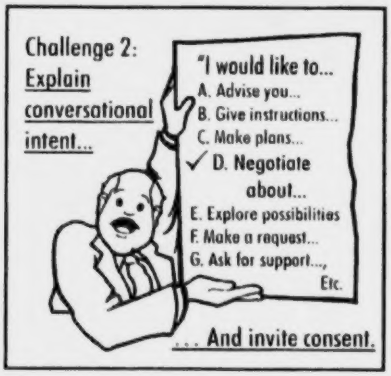
Your notes on this exercise:

Second exercise for Challenge 1: Learning from the past with the tools of the present. Think of one or more conversations in your life that went badly. Imagine how the conversations might have gone better with more responsive listening. Write down your alternative version of the conversation.

Challenge Two

EXPLAINING YOUR CONVERSATIONAL INTENT AND INVITING CONSENT

SUMMARY(repeated from Introduction) In order to help your conversation partner cooperate with you and to reduce possible misunderstandings, start important conversations by inviting your conversation partner to join you in the specific kind of conversation you want to have. The more the conversation is going to mean to you, the more important it is for your conversation partner to understand the big picture. If you need to have a long, complex, or emotion-laden conversation with someone, it will make a big difference if you briefly explain your conversational intention first and then invite the consent of your intended conversation partner.


Challenge 2:
Explain conversational intent...
"I would like to...
A. Advise you...
B. Give instructions...
C. Make plans...
✓ D. Negotiate about...
E. Explore possibilities
F. Make a request...
G. Ask for support...,
Etc.
... And invite consent.

Why explain? Some conversations require a lot more time, effort and involvement than others. If you want to have a conversation that will require a significant amount of effort from the other person, it will go better if that person understands what he or she is getting into and consents to participate. Of course, in giving up the varying amounts of coercion and surprise that are at work when we just launch into whatever we want to talk about, we are more vulnerable to being turned down. But, when people agree to talk with us, they will be more present in the conversation and more able to either meet our needs or explain why they can't (and perhaps suggest alternatives we had not thought of).

Many good communicators do this **explaining intent/inviting consent** without giving it any thought. They start important conversations by saying things such as:

"Hi, Steve. I need to ask for your help on my project. Got a minute to talk about it?"

"Uh...Maria, do you have a minute? Right now I'd like to talk to you about... Is that OK?"

"Well, sit down for a minute and let me tell you what happened..."

"Hello there, Mr. Sanchez. Say, uh...I'm not completely comfortable about this job. Can we talk about it for a few minutes?"

"Hi, Jerry, this is Mike. How ya doin'? I want to talk to you about Fred. He's in jail again. Is this a good time to talk?"

When we offer such combined *explanations-of-intent* and *invitations-to-consent* we can help our conversations along in four important ways:

First, we give our listeners a chance to consent to or decline the offer of a specific conversation. A person who has agreed to participate will participate more fully.

Second, we help our listeners to understand the "big picture," the overall goal of the conversation-to-come. (Many scholars in linguistics and communication studies now agree that understanding a person's overall conversational intention is crucial for understanding that person's message in words and gestures.[12])

Third, we allow our listeners to get ready for what is coming, especially if the topic is emotionally charged. (If we surprise people by launching into emotional conversations, they may respond by avoiding further conversations with us or by being permanently on guard.)

And fourth, we help our listeners understand the role that we want them to play in the conversation: fellow problem solver, employee receiving instructions, giver of emotional support, and so on. These are very different roles to play. Our conversations will go better if we ask people to play only one conversational role at a time.

Getting explicit. Often people conduct this "negotiation about conversation" through body language and tone of voice during the first few seconds of interaction. But since we often have to talk with people whose body language and tone of voice patterns may be quite different from ours, we may need to be more explicit and direct in the way we ask people to have conversations with us. The more important the conversation is to you, the more important it is to have your partner's consent and conscious participation. On the other hand, just saying, "Hi!", or talking about the weather does not require this kind of preparation, because very little is being required of the other person, and people can easily indicate with their tone of voice whether or not they are interested in chatting.

To be invited into a conversation is an act of respect. A consciously consenting participant is much more likely to pay attention and cooperate than someone who feels pushed into an undefined conversation by the force of another person's talking. It's not universal, but to assume without asking that a person is available to talk may be interpreted by many people as lack of respect. When we begin a conversation by respecting the wishes of the other person, we start to generate some of the goodwill (trust that their wishes will be considered) needed for creative problem solving. I believe that the empathy we get will be more genuine and the agreements we reach will be more reliable if we give people a choice about talking with us.

As you become consciously familiar with various kinds of conversational intentions, you will find it easier to:

- Invite someone to have one of a wide range of conversations, depending on your wants or needs
- Agree to someone's conversational invitation
- Say, "no." Decline or re-negotiate a conversational invitation from someone
- When in doubt, gently prompt a person to clarify what kind of conversation she or he is trying to have with you
- Avoid conversations that are negative, self-defeating or self-destructive

Finding your voice in different situations. In the exercises at the end of this chapter you will find a list of the most common conversational intentions. *You can use the Exploratory List of Conversational Intentions to expand the range of the conversations you feel comfortable starting.* The exercise pages provide a place for you to make notes as you work with a practice partner and explore how it feels to start each of the conversations on the list.

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[12] For intensely scholarly reflections on this complex issue, see Adrian Akmajian (*et al.*), *Linguistics: An Introduction to Language and Communication*, Cambridge, MIT Press, 1990. Chap.9, and Philip R. Cohen (*et al.*), Editors, *Intentions in Communication*, Cambridge, MIT Press, 1990, especially Chap. 2, Michael E. Bratman's essay.

Although few conversations are exactly alike, for the sake of exploration we can group most English conversations into approximately forty overlapping types of intention. I classify about thirty of these intents as fulfilling and about twelve as unfulfilling. The goal here is not to develop rigid logical categories, but instead to suggest many of the "flavors" of conversational intention that can be distinguished in everyday talking and listening (including exits and "time-outs"). The goal of presenting the list of fulfilling intentions is to help you feel empowered to start a wide range of new and more satisfying conversations. As you explore these lists feel free to add your own entries.

Intentions worth avoiding. In order to be realistic about how people actually behave, I have included a second list, at the end of this chapter, that contains what I call conversational intentions that create problems. Here I have included motives such as to coerce, to deceive, to punish, to demean, "stone-wall," etc. In our time, TV, movies, popular music and books continually bombard us with ready-made examples of extraordinary sarcasm, cruelty, and violence. So in the process of developing a positive personal style of interaction, we may have to struggle against what is almost a cultural brainwashing in favor of violence and against cooperation, respect and kindness. There are many moral arguments about these matters and I leave it to you to decide the issues of morality. I would, however, like to point out three of the most serious pragmatic liabilities of these coercive conversational intentions.

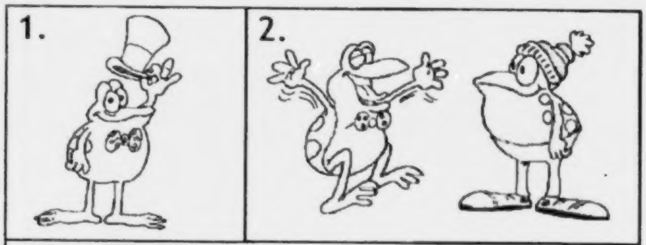
It will come back to you. The first is that whatever we do to others, we teach others to do back to us, both in conversation and in life in general. This was brought home to me quite chillingly over a period of years as I observed a stressed-out, single-mother friend of mine use sarcasm as a way of trying to discipline her bright ten-year-old son. Quickly the ten-year-old became a teenager who would speak to his mother with the same withering sarcasm she had used on him.

They will leave. The unfulfilling intentions and actions on the second list may provide some short-term satisfaction as ways of venting feelings of anger or frustration. But the second drawback of these actions is that anyone who can avoid being the target of them will probably not stay around to be coerced or demeaned. And if someone can't leave, no one involved will be happy.

Very bad things can happen. There are a variety of tragedies in recent years that illustrate how catastrophes can be created by coercive conversations: An engineer warned managers at the Challenger rocket site that cold weather would cause parts of the rocket to fail. The managers "stonewalled," the rocket was launched, and the four astronauts on board died when the rocket exploded. An Air Florida airliner crashed on takeoff, killing almost all passengers on board, because the pilot coerced the reluctant copilot into taking off with too much ice on the wings. And it has become a recurring sorrow in the United States that teenagers continually humiliated at school return to murder their classmates and teachers.

Such considerations suggest that it is in our own deep best interest to explore more sustainable conversational intentions.

First exercise for Challenge 2: Explaining the kind of conversation you want to have. With your practice partner, try starting each of the conversations on the list. Note which feel easy to start and which feel more challenging. Begin with: **"Right now I'd like to..."** or **"I'd like to take about 1/5/30 minutes and..."**



Inspire your conversation partner to listen by first introducing your conversational intent.

AN EXPLORATORY LIST OF FULFILLING CONVERSATIONAL INTENTIONS **"Right now I'd like to take about 5 minutes and..."**	
1.	...tell you about my experiences/feelings... ...that involve no implied requests or complaints toward you OR ...so that you will understand the request, offer, complaint, etc., I want to make
2.	...hear what's happening with you. (More specific: ...hear how you are doing with [topic]...)
3.	...entertain you with a story.
4.	...explore some possibilities concerning ... (requiring your empathy but not your advice or permission)
5.	...plan a course of action for myself (with your help or with you as listener/witness only)
6.	...coordinate/plan our actions together concerning...
7.	...express my affection for you (or appreciation of you concerning...)
8.	...express support for you as you cope with a difficult situation.
9.	...complain/make a request about something you have done (or said) (for better resolution of conflicts, translate complaints into requests)
10.	...confirm my understanding of the experience or position you just shared. (this usually continues with "I hear that you...," "Sounds like you...," "So you're feeling kinda...," or "Let me see if I understand you...")
11.	...resolve a conflict that I have with you about...
12.	...negotiate or bargain with you about...
13.	...work with you to reach a decision about...

	AN EXPLORATORY LIST OF FULFILLING CONVERSATIONAL INTENTIONS (continued)
14.	...give you permission or consent to.../...get your permission or consent to...
15.	...give you some information about .../...get some information from you about...
16.	...give you some advice about .../...get some advice from you about...
17.	...give you directions, orders or work assignments... / get directions or orders from you
18.	...make a request of you (for action, time, information, object, money, promise, etc.)
19.	...consent to (or refuse) a request you have made to me.
20.	...make an offer to you (for action, information, object, promise, etc.)
21.	...accept or decline an offer you have made to me.
22.	...persuade or motivate you to adopt (a particular) point of view.
23.	...persuade or motivate you to choose (a particular) course of action.
24.	...forgive you for... / ask for your forgiveness concerning...
25.	...make an apology to you about... / request an apology from you about...
26.	...offer an interpretation of... (what ... means to me) / ask for your interpretation of...
27.	...offer an evaluation of... (how good or bad I think ... is) / ask for your evaluation of...
28.	...change the subject of the conversation and talk about...
29.	...have some time to think things over.
30.	...leave/end this conversation so that I can...

Your notes on this exercise:

Second exercise for Challenge 2: Exploring conversational intentions that create problems. (to be explored with as much privacy as you need, or with a therapist) To what degree do you find yourself relying on these kinds of conversations to influence the people in your life? What possibilities do you see for change? To what degree are you or were you an unwilling participant in such conversations? What possibilities do you see for change as you become more aware of conversational intentions?

AN EXPLORATORY LIST OF UN-FULFILLING CONVERSATIONAL INTENTIONS **(These conversational intentions and related actions are unfulfilling, at the very least, because we would not like someone to do these things to us. And when we do any of these things, we teach and encourage others to do them to us and/or to avoid contact with us.)**	
1.	To lie, deceive or mislead (sometimes partly redeemed by good overall intentions, but usually not)
2.	To threaten
3.	To hurt or abuse
4.	To punish (creates resentment, avoidance and desire for revenge)
5.	To blame (focuses on past instead of present and future)
6.	To control or coerce (force, influence someone against their will and consent)
7.	To manipulate (to influence someone without his or her knowledge and consent)
8.	To demean, humiliate or shame… ...to try to make someone look bad in eyes of others OR ...to try to make people doubt themselves or feel bad about themselves
9.	"Stonewalling:" To deny the existence of a problem in the face of strong evidence and sincere appeals from others
10.	To hide what is important to me from you (if you are an important person in my life)
11.	To suppress or invalidate someone's emotional response to a given event or situation (as in "Don't cry!", or the even more coercive "You stop crying or I'll *really* give you something to cry about!")
12.	To withdraw from interaction in order to avoid the consequences of something I have done.

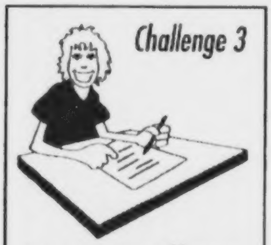
Your notes on this exercise:

Challenge Three

EXPRESSING YOURSELF MORE CLEARLY AND COMPLETELY

SUMMARY(repeated from Introduction) Slow down and give your listeners more information about what you are experiencing by using a wide range of "I-statements." You are likely to get more of your listener's empathy if you express more of what you are seeing and hearing, feeling, interpreting, wanting, and envisioning. In the pages that follow we will explore each of these aspects of experience and how to express them more clearly.

Anytime one person sincerely listens to another, a very creative process is going on in which the listener mentally reconstructs the speaker's experience. The more facets or dimensions of your experience you share with easy-to-grasp "I statements," the easier it will be for your conversation partner to reconstruct your experience accurately and understand what you are thinking, feeling and wanting. This is equally worthwhile whether you are trying to solve a problem with someone or trying to express appreciation for them. Expressing yourself this carefully might appear to take longer than your usual quick style of communication. But if you include all the time it takes to unscramble everyday misunderstandings, and to work through the feelings that usually accompany not being understood, expressing yourself more completely can actually take a lot less time.



express yourself more clearly and completely

Filling in the missing information. If you observe people in conversation carefully, you will begin to notice that human communication works by leaving many things unsaid and depending on the listener to fill in the missing-but-implied information. For example, a receptionist may say to a counselor, "**Your two o'clock is here**," a sentence which, on the face of it, makes no sense at all. She means "**Your client who made an appointment for two o'clock has arrived in the waiting room**," and the counselor knows that. It's amazing how much of the time this abbreviating and implying process works just fine. But, in situations of change, ambiguity, conflict, or great emotional need, our "shorthand" way of speaking may not work at all for at least three possible reasons. First, our listeners may fill in a completely different set of details than the one we intended. Second, our listeners may not understand the significance of what we are saying (they get only some of the details, so miss the big picture). And finally, without actually intending to mislead anyone, we may leave out important parts of our experience that we find embarrassing or imagine will evoke a hostile reaction. *The more serious the consequences of misunderstanding would be, the more we need to both understand our own experience better and help our listeners by giving them a more complete picture of our experience in language that does not attack them.*

According to various communication researchers, there are five main dimensions of experience that your conversation partners can use to recreate your experience inside their minds. The more elements you provide, the higher the probability that your listener's re-creation will match your experience. In this Workbook I will refer to these elements or dimensions of experience as "the five messages."

Examples in table format. The example in the table below outlines a five-part way of saying more of what we are experiencing. The shorthand version of the message below would be something like, "Stop that racing!" Here are the details of the five messages that are left out in the shorthand version: (Please read down the columns)

The Five Messages	express:	Example (in a hospital, nurse to young patient):
seeing, hearing...	1. What are you seeing, hearing or otherwise sensing? (facts only)	**"John, when I see you racing your wheelchair down the hall...**
and feeling...	2. What emotions are you feeling?	**...I feel really upset...**
because I...	3. What interpretations, wants, needs, memories or anticipations of yours support those feelings?	**...because I imagine that you are going to hurt yourself and someone else, too...**
and now I want...	4. What action, information or commitment do you want now?	**...so I want you to promise me right now that you will slow down...**
so that...	5. What positive results will that action, information or commitment lead to in the future? (no threats)	**...so that you can get out of here in one piece and I can stop worrying about a collision."**

Note: My deep appreciation goes to the work of Marshall Rosenberg[13] for helping me to understand Messages 1 through 4, to the work of Sharon and Gordon Bower[14] for helping me understand Message 5, and to the work of John Grinder and Richard Bandler for helping my understand how people "delete" various aspects of their experience from their communication.[15] For interesting variations on the theme of complete messages, see their books noted below.

In the table that starts below and continues on the next page you will find eight examples of statements that would give your listener a full range of information about your experience. Notice how a person's feelings can change according to the needs and interpretations they bring to a situation. (Please read across the rows)

1. When I saw/heard...	*2. I felt...*	*3. because I... (need, want, interpret, associate, etc.)*	*4. and now I want (then I wanted)...*	*5. so that (in order to)...*
When I saw the bear in the woods with her three cubs...	**...I felt overjoyed!...**	**...because I needed a picture of bears for my wildlife class...**	**...and I wanted the bear to stand perfectly still...**	**so I could focus my camera.**
When I saw the bear in the woods with her three cubs...	**...I felt terrified!...**	**...because I remembered that bears with cubs are very aggressive...**	**...and I wanted to get out of there fast...**	**so that the bear would not pick up my scent.**

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[13] Marshall B. Rosenberg, *Nonviolent Communication: A Language of Compassion*. Del Mar, CA: PuddleDancer Press. 1999.

[14] Sharon Anthony Bower and Gordon H. Bower, *Asserting Yourself: A Practical Guide for Positive Change*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley. 1976.

[15] Richard Bandler and John Grinder, *The Structure of Magic*, Vol 1. Palo Alto: Science and Behavior Books. 1975.

MORE EXAMPLES OF THE FIVE MESSAGES IN ACTION:

1. When I saw/heard...	*2. I felt...*	*3. because I...(need, want, interpret, associate, etc.)*	*4. and now I want (then I wanted)...*	*5. so that (in order to)...*
When I saw the dishes in the sink...	**...I felt happy...**	**...because I guessed that you had come back from your trip to Mexico...**	**...and I want you to tell me all about the Aztec ruins you saw...**	**...so that I can liven up some scenes in the short story I'm writing.**
When I saw the dishes in the sink...	**...I felt irritated...**	**...because I want to start cooking dinner right away...**	**...and I want to ask you to help me do the dishes right now...**	**...so that dinner will be ready by the time our guests arrive.**
When I saw the flying saucer on your roof...	**... felt more excited than I have ever been in my life...**	**...because I imagined the saucer people would give you the anti-gravity formula...**	**...and I wanted you to promise that you would share it with me...**	**...so that we would both get rich and famous.**
When I saw the flying saucer on your roof...	**...I felt more afraid than I have ever been in my life...**	**...because I imagined the saucer people were going to kidnap you...**	**...and I wanted you to run for your life...**	**...so that you would not get abducted and maybe turned into a zombie.**
When I saw the grant application in the office mail...	**...I felt delighted...**	**...because I think our program is good enough to win a large grant...**	**...and I want to ask you to help me with the budget pages...**	**...so that we can get the application in before the deadline.**
When I saw the grant application in the office mail...	**...I felt depressed...**	**...because I can't see clients when I'm filling out forms...**	**...and I want you to help me with the budget pages...**	**...so that I can keep up my case work over the next three weeks.**

Exercise for Challenge 3: Exploring the Five Messages. Re-tell the story of some of your conflicts, frustrations and delights using the five-message format. Write one Five Messages statement a day in a journal or notebook. Here are some suggestions for expressing each of the Five Messages more clearly:

The Five Messages:	Suggestions for expressing more clearly:
1. What are you seeing, hearing or otherwise sensing? (facts only)	A. Begin by stating what you actually see or hear rather than how you feel about it or what you think of it. B. Describe specific actions observed, avoid generalizing such as "you always..." or "you never..." C. Be specific about place, time, color, texture, position and how often. D. Describe rather than diagnose. Avoid words that label or judge the actions you observe such as "slimy," "lousy," "neurotic," etc.. E. Avoid descriptions of a situation that imply emotions without actually stating them, such as "totally disgusting" and "horrible." State your feelings explicitly in Message 2 (described next). For example: "When I saw the big coffee stain on the rug..." is easier to hear and understand than "When you ruined my day, as always, with your slimy, stinking, totally disgusting, rotten antics..."
2. What emotions are you feeling?	A. Use specific emotion describers such as "I feel...": glad, angry, delighted, sad, afraid, resentful, embarrassed, calm, enthusiastic, fearful, manic, depressed, happy, etc. B. Avoid feeling words that imply the action of another person: "I feel.., ignored, manipulated, mistreated, neglected, rejected, dominated, abandoned, used, cheated (etc.)" Notice how these words indirectly blame the listener for the speaker's emotions. In order to help your listener understand what you are feeling, translate these "implied blame" words into an explicitly named emotion (see Suggestion A, above) and an interpretation or unmet want (Message 3). For example: "I am feeling totally ignored by you" probably means "I am feeling really sad (or angry) because I want you to pay more attention to me, (spend more time with me, etc.)..."

Exercise for Challenge 3 (continued):

The Five Messages:	Suggestions for expressing more clearly:
3. What interpretations, wants, needs, memories or anticipations of yours support those feelings?	A. Express the interpretations, wants, hopes, understandings and associations that support your feelings: ... because I imagine that... ... because I see that as... ... because I remember how... ... because I take that to mean ... instead of ... because YOU ...(did, said, did not, etc.) B. Under our interpretations there are often unmet wants, hopes and needs. Explore and express the unmet wants that also support your feelings: ... because I wanted ... ... because I would have liked ... ... because I was hoping that... ... because I needed ... instead of ... because YOU ...(did, said, did not, etc.)
4. What action, information or commitment do you want now?	A. Ask for action or information, or for a present commitment to future action or information giving. Since most people cannot produce emotions on request, it is generally not productive to ask a person for an emotion ("I want you to cheer up." "I want you to be angry about this issue." Etc.) B. If your want is general, ask for a specific step toward it. Translate .open-ended requests, such as for "consideration, respect, help, understanding, support" etc., into specific action verbs such as please "listen, sit, lift, carry, tell me, hold me," etc. C. State your want in positive terms: "Please arrive at eight..." rather than "Don't be late..." D. Include when, where, how. Including the details can help you to avoid big misunderstandings.
5. What positive results will that action, information or commitment lead to in the future? (no threats)	In describing the specific positive results of receiving your request, you allow the other person to become motivated by feeling capable of giving something worthwhile. This prepares the ground for later expressions of appreciation, and points your relationship toward mutual appreciation and the exercise of competence (more enjoyable to live with), rather than guilt, duty, obedience or resentment (much less enjoyable to live with).

Exercise for Challenge 3 (continued): Re-tell the story of some of your conflicts, frustrations and delights using the five-message format.

Elements of your experience:	***...expressed as five different "I-messages":***
1. What are you seeing, hearing or otherwise sensing? (the facts without evaluation)	(I saw, heard, etc., ...)
2. What emotions are you feeling?	(I felt...)
3. What interpretations or wants of yours support those feelings?	(because I...)
4. What action, information or commitment do you want now.	(and now I would like...)
5. What positive results will that action, information or commitment lead to in the future?	(so that...)

Elements of your experience:	***...expressed as five different "I-messages":***
1. What are you seeing, hearing or otherwise sensing? (the facts without evaluation)	(I saw, heard, etc., ...)
2. What emotions are you feeling?	(I felt...)
3. What interpretations or wants of yours support those feelings?	(because I...)
4. What action, information or commitment do you want now.	(and now I would like...)
5. What positive results will that action, information or commitment lead to in the future?	(so that...)

Exercise for Challenge 3 (continued): Re-tell the story of some of your conflicts, frustrations and delights using the five-message format.

Elements of your experience:	***...expressed as five different "I-messages":***
1. What are you seeing, hearing or otherwise sensing? (the facts without evaluation)	(I saw, heard, etc., ...)
2. What emotions are you feeling?	(I felt...)
3. What interpretations or wants of yours support those feelings?	(because I...)
4. What action, information or commitment do you want now.	(and now I would like...)
5. What positive results will that action, information or commitment lead to in the future?	(so that...)

Elements of your experience:	***...expressed as five different "I-messages":***
1. What are you seeing, hearing or otherwise sensing? (the facts without evaluation)	(I saw, heard, etc., ...)
2. What emotions are you feeling?	(I felt...)
3. What interpretations or wants of yours support those feelings?	(because I...)
4. What action, information or commitment do you want now.	(and now I would like...)
5. What positive results will that action, information or commitment lead to in the future?	(so that...)

Reading 3-1: SAYING WHAT'S IN OUR HEARTS

Honest conversations viewed as counseling and counseling viewed as conversations that allow for honesty

by Dennis Rivers, MA

I wrote this essay for my students during a time when I was teaching a class on peer counseling. I was trying to describe in everyday language some of the good things that happen in counseling, that ALSO happen in friendship, good parenting, mentoring and ministering.

According to the psychotherapists Carl Rogers[16] (in the 1960's), Margaret and Jordan Paul[17] (in the 1980s) and Brad Blanton[18] (in the 1990's), there is one main reason people suffer in their relationships with one another. And it's not best understood as some jargon about ids and egos and superegos. It's that we need to face more of the truth and tell more of the truth about what's happening in our lives, about how we feel, and about what we ourselves are doing.

Many people, probably most of us at some time or other, struggle to deal with troubling feelings and problem situations in life by using a whole range of avoidance maneuvers: we may pretend nothing is happening, focus on blaming others, or try to find ways of avoiding embarrassment, distracting ourselves and/or minimizing conflict. The problem with these ways of dealing with inner and outer conflicts is that they don't work well in the long run. If we try to deal with our problems by pretending that nothing is wrong, we run the risk of becoming numb or getting deeply confused about what we actually want and how we actually feel. And from tooth decay to auto repair to marriage, avoidance maneuvers won't protect us from the practical consequences of our difficulties.

Now what, you may ask, does this have to do with counseling? Well, a counselor is someone to whom you can tell the truth. And as you start to tell more of the truth to the counselor, you can start to admit the more of the truth to yourself, and rehearse compassionate ways of talking about it with others.

This is not an easy task. Early in life, according to Rogers, most of us discovered that if we said what we really felt and wanted, the big important people in our lives would get unhappy with us, (and, I would add, perhaps even slap us across the face). And since we needed their love and approval, we started being good little boys and good little girls and saying whatever would get us hugs, birthday presents, and chocolate cake. If we are lucky in life, our parents and teachers help us to learn how to recognize our own feelings and tell the truth about them in conciliatory ways. But this is a complex process, and more often, our parents and teachers didn't get much help on these issues themselves, so they may not have been able to give us much help. As a result of this, many people arrive in adult life with a giant gap between what they actually feel and what the role they play says they are supposed to feel, and with no skills for closing that gap.

For example, as a child you were supposed to love your parents, right? But what if your dad came home drunk every night and hit your mom? How do you handle the gap between the fact that you're supposed to love your dad and the fact that you don't like him? These are the kinds of situations that bring people to counseling (or to the nightly six-pack of beer). And life is full of them.

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[16] Carl R. Rogers, *On Becoming a Person: A Therapist's View of Psychotherapy.* Boston: Houghton Mifflin. 1995.

[17] Margaret and Jordan Paul, *Do I Have To Give Up Me To Be Loved By You.* Minneapolis: CompCare Publishers. 1983.

[18] Brad Blanton, *How to Transform Your Life By Telling the Truth.* New York: Dell. 1996.

It all boils down to this: Life is tough and complex, ready or not. It is always tempting to try to get what you want (or to escape what you fear) by saying or doing whatever will avoid conflict, even if that means saying things you don't really mean, doing things you don't feel good about, or just blanking out. After you've been around for a while you start to realize that the cost of this kind of maneuvering is a heavy heart.

From what I've seen, there is no secret magic wand of psychotherapy that can instantly lighten a heart thus burdened. Psychotherapists are in the same human boat as the rest of us; they get depressed and divorced and commit suicide just like ordinary folks. You and the person you are trying to help are in the same human boat. There is no life without troubles. Roofs leak. The people you love get sick and die. Our needs turn out to be in conflict with the needs of people we care about. The best made agreements come unglued. People fall out of love. And it is always tempting to pretend that everything is just fine. But I believe very strongly that we will all like ourselves a lot more if we choose the troubles that come from being more honest and more engaged, rather than the troubles that come from various forms of conflict avoidance and self-deception, such as "I'll feel better if I have another drink." or "What she doesn't know won't hurt her." etc.

Our truthful lives will probably not get any easier, but they will get a lot more satisfying. Good counselors, psychotherapists, mentors and friends, whatever their degree (or not), hold that knowledge for us, as we struggle to learn it and earn it. As adults there are many new possibilities open to us that were not available to us when we were children. We can learn to negotiate more of our conflicts, to confront more of our difficulties and to be honest about our feelings without being mean. So the fact is that we don't need to run away from our problems any more. What we need is to get in touch with ourselves and to learn new skills.

A counselor is someone who does not condemn you for your evasions, mistakes or lack of skill, and believes in your worth as a person, your capacity to tell the truth and your strength to bear the truth, no matter what you've done up to now. That's what makes counseling similar to being a priest, a rabbi, a minister or a really good friend. When we started pretending in order to please others at age three or four, that was the only way we could figure out how to get what we wanted. Now that we are adults we are capable of learning to tell the truth in conciliatory ways and we are capable of getting a lot more of what we want just by being courageous enough to ask for it. A good counselor, whether that person is a peer-counselor or a psychiatrist, is someone who invites us out of the role of maneuvering child and into the role of straightforward adult.

A counselor won't force you to tell the truth. It wouldn't be your truth if it were forced, it would just be one more thing you were saying to keep someone off your back. But a counselor is willing to hear how you actually feel. In this approach there are no bad feelings, there are only bad actions. It's OK to hate your drunken father; it's not OK to pick up a gun and shoot him. A big part of counseling is teaching people to make that distinction. In fact, the more people can acknowledge their feelings, the less they need to blindly act them out.

It's not the counselor's job to pull that stuff out of people; it's the counselor's job to be there to receive it and acknowledge it when it comes out in its own time. And to encourage the new skills and all the little moments of honesty that help a person toward a deeper truthfulness. There's a direct link between skill and awareness at work here. People are reluctant to acknowledge problems they feel they can't do anything about. As counseling conversations help a person to feel more confident about being able to talk things over and talk things out, a person may become more willing to face and confront conflicts and problems.

As we realize that the counselor accepts us warts and all, clumsy coping maneuvers and all, we start to accept ourselves more. We are not angels and we are not devils. We are just ordinary human beings trying to figure how to get through life. There is a lot of trial and error along the way and that is nothing to be ashamed of. No one, absolutely no one, can learn to be human without making mistakes. But it is easy to imagine, when I am alone with my mistakes, that I am the stupidest, crummiest person in the world. A good counselor, (...friend, minister, parent, support group member) is someone who helps us develop a more realistic and forgiving picture of ourselves.

These relationships based on deep acceptance help to free us from the fantasy of being all-good or all-bad, help to free us from the need to keep up appearances. Thus, we can start to acknowledge and learn from whatever is going on inside us. Freed from the need to defend our mistakes, we can actually look at them, and get beyond the need to repeat them. But these are hard things to learn alone. It really helps if someone accompanies us along that road.

Sometimes you will be the receiver of that acceptance and sometimes the giver. Whichever role you happen to play at a given moment, it's helpful to understand that honest, caring, empathic conversations (Carl Rogers' big three), just by themselves, set in motion a kind of deep learning that has come to be known as "healing." "Healing" is a beautiful word and a powerful metaphor for positive change. But "healing" can also be a misleading word because of the way it de-emphasizes learning and everyone's capacity to learn new ways of relating to people and navigating through life.

Here are five of the "deep learnings" that I see going on in almost all supportive and empathic conversations.

- In paying attention to someone in a calm, accepting way, you teach that person to pay attention to themselves in just that way.
- In caring for others, you teach them to care for themselves and you help them to feel more like caring about others.
- The more you have faced and accepted your own feelings, the more you can be a supportive witness for another person who is struggling to face and accept his or her feelings.
- In forgiving people for being human and making mistakes and having limits, you teach people to forgive themselves and start over, and you help them to have a more forgiving attitude toward others.
- By having conversations that include the honest sharing and recognition of feelings, and the exploration of alternative possibilities of action, you help a person to see that, by gradual degrees, they can start to have more honest and fruitful conversations with the important people in their lives.

These experiences belong to everyone, since they are part of being human. They are ours to learn and, through the depth of our caring, honesty and empathy, ours to give. I believe they are the heart of counseling.

Reading 3-2: Peer Counseling With the Five Messages

A three-point analysis of using the Five Messages
to help people face their problems in more satisfying ways.

by Dennis Rivers, MA

Point 1. Life includes conflicts and difficult situations. People who are in need of emotional support and/or who show up for counseling are usually feeling some combination of fear, confusion, "stuckness", frustration and loss. These are usually healthy distresses, signals from the person's body-mind and life that something needs attention. (As psychology professor Lawrence Brammer points out in his book, *The Helping Relationship*, most people who need counseling and emotional support are not "mentally ill.") From a humanistic, existential or Rogerian perspective, the point of counseling is not simply to make these distressing feelings go away, it is to encourage a person to find their own way of changing what needs to be changed, learning what needs to be learned and accepting what needs to be accepted. Here is a list of the typical kinds of life stresses that cause people to reach out for emotional support and guidance.

Afraid: (examples)

to face the feelings I'm having, (don't know any safe way to "let off steam")
to tell people I don't like what they are doing
to face the mistakes I've made because I'll feel ashamed,
(so I keep on making the same mistakes)
to confront people with a mistake I think they have made / are making
to admit that my needs are in conflict with the needs of important people in my life
of losing people's love, respect and acceptance if I say what I really feel or want

Confused by changes in life, and need to develop new sense of competence and inner strength: (examples)

kids grow up and leave home -- the struggle to stay connected with them
new boss at work -- lose job -- change job -- no job
go to college or move to a new community -- no emotional support
start or end a relationship -- have to reorganize my life -- who am I now?
get pregnant -- have to make big decisions and reorganize life -- who am I now?
parents get old, need me to take care of them, feels like I'm *their* parent now
my body is changing without asking my permission, and I don't know what to expect next (truest for young teens & elders)

Stuck/frustrated: (examples)

in a family that I both love and hate, always colliding with other people
in a job that I don't like, or stuck in jail -- don't know where to go next
in a relationship that seems to have gone flat -- don't know how to restart some good feelings between me and my partner

Feeling a sense of loss: (examples)

my best friend moved to another town
my child died -- one of my parents died
in order to have a place of my own, I have to leave home
one of my parents became an alcoholic and I don't like being around him/her

Point 2. People often don't know how to negotiate and how to work their way through difficult situations like the ones just listed, so they cope by using a variety of avoidance maneuvers or they act out their distress in ways that hurt themselves or others. The problem with the responses listed below is that they don't work well past the first moment.

- Deleting -- I just don't mention that I took that money out of your wallet.
- Distorting -- I say "it broke" when what happened was that I broke it.
- Generalizing -- I get mad and say "you never" or "you always" in order to avoid having to say "I'm frustrated" or "I need your help/love/time…"
- Distracting -- I start a fight, get drunk, watch lots of TV, start a new romance, move to a new town -- all these can be done with the unconscious intention of running away from my feelings
- Pretending -- I act out feelings that I don't have in order to avoid the ones I do have. (Anger is frequently substituted for sorrow.)
- Denying -- Blanking out -- I don't feel anything and I don't know what you're talking about -- often accompanied by alcohol
- Spacing out -- I'm not really here -- I'm somewhere else -- often accompanied by drugs or alcohol. Extreme forms include going crazy to extricate oneself from what seems like an impossible situation.
- "Acting out" -- I express my distress by breaking things, hitting people, running away or doing something that will get me arrested (and out of the original problem situation).

What people actually need is consciously to express more of their feelings and more of the significance of their situation, usually in words and conversations (but it could be in drawing or clay, etc.), in order to be able to think about what is happening in their lives and feel their way to their next step. Feelings of embarrassment ("I'm no good if I've got a problem.") and lack of skill make it harder for a person to face their difficulties.

By adopting an attitude of deep acceptance, a counselor reassures a person of their fundamental worth, and thus makes it easier for people to admit their feelings and get actively engaged in changing what needs to be changed, learning what needs to be learned and accepting what needs to be accepted.

Point 3. Encouraging people to listen and express themselves with the Five Messages is one way of helping people become more directly engaged with their life challenges. Those processes of changing, learning and accepting mentioned in Point 2 require intense involvement. Working with the Five Messages is one way of overcoming one's own avoidance maneuvers -- by systematically exploring the questions, "What am I experiencing?" and "What are you experiencing?"

From the Five Messages' point of view there are five different activities going on inside a person, whether that person is you or I. It would help our self-understanding if we would pay more attention to all five. And it would help our communication in conflict situations if we would express all five and listen for all five:

1. observing -- what I am seeing, hearing, touching
   (a simple description of "just the facts")
2. emoting -- the emotions I am experiencing, such as joy, sorrow, frustration, fear, delight, anger, regret, etc., acknowledged in an "I statement"
3. interpreting, evaluating, associating and past wants -- a large part of my emotional response (sometimes all) to a situation can be caused by my own wants and my interpretation and evaluation of other people's actions.
4. wanting, hoping -- what I want now in terms of action, information, conversation or promise
5. envisioning, anticipating results -- what good situation will come about if I get what I'm asking for. It helps people understand and empathize with requests when the "happy ending" is expressed as part of the request itself.

Here is an example of a person understanding and communicating her or his own feelings and wants, in a situation where it would be easy to be bossy or condescending:

The Five Messages:	Example (social worker to runaway):
1. What are you seeing, hearing or otherwise sensing? (facts only)	**"Hi there! I'd like to talk to you for a second... When I see you sitting out here on the street in the cold...**
2. What emotions are you feeling?	**...I feel really concerned about you...**
3. What interpretations, wants, needs, memories or anticipation's of yours support those feelings?	**...because I imagine that you are going to get sick...**
4. What action, information or commitment do you want now?	**...and I want to ask you to come with me to our city's teen shelter...**
5. What positive results will that action, information or commitment lead to in the future? (no threats)	**...so that you can get some food to eat and have a safe place to stay tonight"**

Working with the Five Messages can be a powerful and creative way of:

- becoming aware of more of what I am experiencing
- telling the truth about what I am experiencing
- listening for the truth of your experience ("listening with five ears")
- encouraging you to say more about what you are experiencing (by sounding you out with open-ended questions about each message)
- reflecting back elements of what another person is experiencing (especially feelings, so that a person knows they've been understood)
- summarizing a big chunk of my own or your experience
- taking responsibility for my emotional responses and encouraging you, by my example, do the same

Suggested exercise: Make a list of emotional-support situations in your life in which you could use the Five Messages to deepen the quality of the emotional support you give.

Challenge Four

TRANSLATING COMPLAINTS AND CRITICISMS INTO REQUESTS

SUMMARY(repeated from Introduction):
Translate your (and other people's) complaints and criticisms into specific requests, and explain your requests. In order to get more cooperation from others, whenever possible ask for what you want by using specific, action-oriented, positive language rather than by using generalizations, "why's," "don'ts" or "somebody should's." Help your listeners comply by explaining your requests with a "so that...", "it would help me to... if you would..." or "in order to..." Also, when you are receiving criticism and complaints from others, translate and restate the complaints as action requests.

(I introduced these two topics -- making requests and sharing our positive expectations -- in Chapter 3, but they are so important they deserve a chapter all their own.)

from:
to:
bad! no!
I would like you to do it *this* way...
4

Why many people have a hard time making requests. It often feels easier to say, "You're wrong." than it is to say "I need your help." Making requests leaves us much more vulnerable in relation to our conversation partners than making criticisms or complaints. So people have a tendency to complain rather than to request. If we make a request, the other person could turn us down or make fun of us, and the *risk* of disappointment and loss of face is hard to bear. If we complain, on the other hand, we stand on the emotional high ground and our listener is usually on the defensive. However, to improve our chances of getting cooperation from another person, we need to ask for what we want and risk being turned down. With practice we can each learn to bear those risks more skillfully and gracefully.

Why criticisms usually don't get the positive result we want: Whenever we place people on the defensive, their capacity to listen goes down. Their attention and energy will often go into some combination of defending their position, saving face and counter-attacking. Only when they feel safe are they likely to listen and consider how they might meet our needs. The truth of the complaint is not the issue. Because mutual imitation or emotional "echoing" is so much a part of ordinary conversation, a criticism from one partner, no matter how justified, tends to evoke a criticism from the other, bogging the pair down in a spiral of accusations. To avoid this trap, try to approach the other person not as an adversary in a debate but as a problem-solving partner.

Specific action requests help to focus your listener's attention on the present situation. Focus on the actions you want to take and the actions you want others to take in the present and future. (For example, use verbs and adverbs, such as "meet our deadlines regularly.") Avoid proposing changes in a person's supposed character traits (nouns and adjectives, such as "slow worker" or "bad team player"). "How can we solve this problem quickly?" will generally produce much better results than, "Why are you such an awful slow-poke?" In the latter kind of statement, I am actually suggesting to my conversation partner that the behavior I want changed is a fixed and perhaps unchangeable part of their personality, thus undermining my own goals and needs.

Talking about specifics will help to keep the current conversation from becoming one more episode in whatever unresolved conflicts might be in the background of your conversations. Your listener, like all of us, may sometimes be in the grip of feelings of embarrassment, resentment or self-doubt unrelated to the present situation. The more vague and open-ended a criticism is, the easier it is for your listener to hear it as part of those other conflicts. Instead of saying something like "Why does it always take you so long to get things done?", try saying things like "I would like you to fix the faucet in Apartment #4 by five o'clock, so the tenants can use the kitchen sink when they get home tonight?" Of course, your tone of voice is important here. It's important that you yourself are not carrying forward old complaints. Life is lived best one day at a time.

> ***"We criticize people for not giving us what we ourselves are afraid to ask for."***
>
> ***Marshall Rosenberg***

Explanatory clauses can move people to cooperate. Research in social psychology has revealed that many people respond more positively to explained requests than to unexplained requests, even when the supposed explanation is obvious or doesn't actually explain much of anything. Notice the difference between the following two ways of expressing requests:

"Will you please open the window?"
"May I please have a glass of water?"

AND...

"Will you please open the window so that we can get more fresh air in here?"

"May I please have a glass of water? I'm really thirsty."

For many people the second form of the requests is much more inspiring. Why this is so is not certain. My hunches include that by explaining the reason, the speaker is treating the listener as a social equal, worthy of being persuaded and informed as to why a request is being made. The listener is invited to comply with a request to accomplish the stated goal rather than simply to submit to the will of the speaker. Another possibility is that since many requests are linguistically ambiguous and could easily be taken as orders, the explanation emphasizes that the statement is a real request. Whatever the reason, explaining your request makes it more likely that your listener will cooperate.

Explanatory clauses allow your conversation partners to imagine new solutions. While any sort of explanatory clause seems to help, a real explanation of your goal allows your conversation partners to understand the context and purpose of your request. When for some reason they cannot meet your needs in the way you have asked, they may be able to meet your needs in some way that you had not thought of. (For an inspiring discussion of this topic, see *Getting to Yes*, by Fisher, Ury and Patton. They suggest that if you explain your overall goals rather than sticking to a very specific bargaining position, your negotiating adversaries may be able to propose mutually beneficial solutions that satisfy more of the needs of all parties. One main idea of the book is to turn your adversaries into problem-solving partners)

Exercise 4-1: Working on your life situations. Think of some complaints that are current in your life at home, at work or in your community and translate them into specific action requests that include an explanation. (I have included a few "warm up" examples.)

"Don't be so inconsiderate!" could be restated as:
"Please close the door quietly so Aunt Mary can sleep."

"Somebody ought to order some copy paper." could be restated as:
"Would you order two reams of copy paper
today so that we don't run out."

"Turn down that music!" could be restated as:
"Hi. I live upstairs and your music is really booming
through the walls up there. Would you please turn it
down so we can hear our TV"

Reading + Exercise 4-2: Letting Go of Fear -- by David Richo, PhD

Editor's Introduction: Communicating more successfully involves taking all sorts of risks. When we listen we risk being changed by what we hear. But only by listening to others can we build relationships in which people will listen to us. When we express ourselves more clearly and ask for what we want we risk being turned down, rejected or even ridiculed about our needs and requests. But only by expressing more of what we really feel and want can we build relationships of mutual respect, care and fulfillment. (You can't respect the real me if I never show you the real me.) As we explore new possibilities in interpersonal communication, we are challenged to live more courageously, to push beyond our fears, which are really the congealed memories of all our past disappointments. How willing are we to let today be a genuinely new day? The following exercise from psychotherapist David Richo's book, When Love Meets Fear, invites us to work more consciously and creatively with whatever fears may be holding us back from greater interpersonal skill and overall life success. (The Cooperative Communication Skills extended community thanks Dr. Richo for contributing this exercise to the Workbook and the www.coopcomm.org online library. See davericho.com for information on tapes and books by Dr. David Richo)

FREEDOM FROM FEAR -- AN EXPLORATORY EXERCISE

by David Richo, PhD

You may find this worksheet helpful in taking a personal inventory of your fears and in designing affirmations to clear them. It combines the three elements of freedom from fear: admitting it, feeling it fully, and acting as if we were fearless. Read it onto a tape to hear it daily in your own voice or recite or read it regularly. Form an image of yourself acting out each affirmation. This list is meant for a wide audience so add or delete entries to fit your unique situation:

I trust my true fears to give me signals of danger.
I admit that I also have false fears and worries.
I feel compassion toward myself for all the years I have been afraid.
I forgive those who hypnotized me into unreal fears.
I suggest now to myself, over and over, that I am freeing myself from fear.
I have fearlessness to match my fear.
I trust my powers and resourcefulness as a man (woman).
I trust my abundant creativity.
I trust the strength that opens and blooms in me when I have to face something.
I believe in myself as a man/woman who handles what comes his/her way today.
I have it in me to rise to a challenge.
I am more and more aware of how I hold fear in my body.
I stop storing fear in my body.
Now I relax those holding places.

I open my body to joy and serenity.
I release my body from the clench of fear.
I relax the part of me that holds fear the most (jaw, shoulders, neck, etc.).
I let go of the stress and tension that come from fear.
I let go of fear-based thoughts.
I let go of basing my decisions on fear.
I stop listening to those who want to import their fears into me.
I let go of finding something to fear in everything.
I let go of fear and fearing and of believing that everything is fearsome.
I am more and more aware of my instant reflex fear reactions.
I am aware that I have habituated myself to a certain level of adrenaline.
I forego this stressful excitement and choose sane and serene liveliness.
I let go of my obsessive thoughts about how the worst may happen.
I trust myself always to find an alternative.
I see the humor in my fears.
I see the humor in my exaggerated reactions to unreal dangers.
I find a humorous dimension in every fear.
I find a humorous response for every fear.
I play with the pain of fear.
I smile at my scared ego with tough love.
I am confident in my ability to deal with situations or people that scare me.
I have self-healing powers -and- I seek and find support outside myself.
I have an enormous capacity for re-building, restoring, transcending.
I am more and more sure of my abilities.
I am less and less scared by what happens, by what has happened, by what will happen.
I trust an uncanny timing that I keep noticing within myself: I love how I
awake or change or resolve or complete at just the right moment.
Nothing forces me; nothing stops me.
I let go of any fear I have of nature.
I let go of my fears of natural disasters.
I let go of my fears of sickness, accident, old age, and death.
I cease being afraid of knowing, having or showing my feelings.
I let go of my fear of failure or of success.
I let go of the fear behind my guilt and shame.

I let go of my fear of aloneness or of time on my hands.
I let go of my fear of abandonment.
I let go of my fear of engulfment.
I let go of my fear of closeness.
I let go of my fear of commitment.
I let go of my fear of being betrayed.
I let go of my fear of being cheated or robbed.
I let go of my fear of any person.
I let go of my fear of loving.
I let go of my fear of being loved.
I let go of the fear that I will lose, lose money, lose face, lose freedom,
lose friends, lose family members, lose respect, lose status, lose my job, lose out.
I let go of my fear of having to grieve.
I keep letting go and I keep going on.
I let go of my paranoia.
I give up my phobic rituals.
I let go of my performance fears.
I let go of my sexual fears.
I let go of fears about my adequacy as a parent or child, as a worker, as a partner, or friend.
I let go of the need to be in control.
I acknowledge control as a mask for my fear.
I let go of my need to be right, to be first, to be perfect.
I let go of my belief that I am entitled to be taken care of.
I let go of my fear of the conditions of existence:
I accept that I may sometimes lose;
I accept that things change and end;
I accept that pain is part of human growth;
I accept that things are not always fair;
I accept that people may lie to me, betray me, or not be loyal to me.
I am flexible enough to accept life as it is, forgiving enough to accept it
as it has been.
I drop the need for or belief in a personal exemption from the conditions
of my existence.
I acknowledge my present predicament as a path.

I trust a design in spite of the display.

I let go of more than any fate can take.

I appreciate all the ways that things work out for me.

I appreciate the graces that everywhere surround and enrich my life.

I find the alternatives that always exist behind the apparent dead-end of fear.

I open myself to the flow of life and people and events.

I am grateful for the love that awaits me everywhere.

I feel deeply loved by many people near and far, living and dead.

I feel loved and watched over by a higher power (God, Universe, etc.).

I believe that I have an important destiny,
that I am living in accord with it,
and that I will survive to fulfill it.

I let myself have the full measure of:
the joy I was meant to feel,
the joy of living without fear.

I let fear go and let joy in.

I let fear go and let love in.

I let go of fears and enlarge my sympathies.

I am more and more aware of others' fears, more and more sensitive to
them, more and more compassionate toward them.

I am more and more acceptant of all kinds of people.

I enlarge my circle of love to include every living being: I show my love.

I am more and more courageous as I live my program for dealing with fear:

I let go of control;

I let the chips fall where they may;

I admit my fear;

I feel my fear by letting it pass through me;

I act as if I were free of fear;

I enjoy the humor in my fears;

I expand my compassion toward myself and everyone.

I have pluck and wit.

I let go of being on the defensive.

I protect myself.

I am non-violent.

I am intrepid under fire.

I am a hero: I live through pain and am transformed by it.

I am undaunted by people or circumstances that may threaten me.

I let people's attempts to menace me fall flat.

I give up running from threats.

I give up shrinking from a fight.

I show grace under pressure.

I stop running; I stop hiding.

More and more of my fear is becoming healthy excitement.

I meet danger face to face.

I stand up to a fight.

I take the bull by the horns.

I run the gauntlet.

I put my head in the lion's mouth.

I stick to my guns and hold my fire.

An automatic courage arises in me when I face a threat.

I dare to show myself as I am: afraid and courageous.

I hereby release the courage that has lain hidden within me.

I am thankful for the gift of fortitude.

I let go of hesitation and self-doubt.

I am hardy in the face of fear.

I have grit, stamina, and toughness.

I take risks and always act with responsibility and grace.

I let go of the fear of being different.

I let go of the need to meet others' expectations.

I cease being intimidated by others' anger.

I let go of my fear of what may happen if people do not like me.

I let go of my fear of false accusations.

I let go of having to do it his/her/their way.

I acknowledge that behind my exaggerated sense of obligation
is a fear of my own freedom.

I let go of my terror about disapproval, ridicule, or rejection.

I dare to stop auditioning for people's approval.

I dare to give up my act.

I give up all my poses, pretenses, and posturings.

I dare to be myself.
I acknowledge that behind my fear of self-disclosure is a fear of freedom.
I dare to show my hand, to show my inclinations, to show my enthusiasms.
I let my every word, feeling, and deed reveal me as I truly am.
I love being found out, i.e., caught in the act of being my authentic self.
I explore the farthest reaches of my identity.
I dare to live the life that truly reflects my deepest needs and wishes.
I give up the need to correct people's impressions of me.
I give up being afraid of my own power.
I am irrepressible.
I draw upon ever-renewing sources of lively energy within me.
I am great-hearted and bold-spirited.
I dare to give of myself unconditionally -and-
I dare to be unconditionally committed to maintaining my own boundaries.
I am open to the grace that shows me the difference.
I fling open the gates of my soul.
I set free my love, till now imprisoned by fear.
I set free my joy, till now imprisoned by fear.
I honor and evoke my animal powers, my human powers, my divine powers.
I let true love cast out my fear.
As I let go of my fear, I free the world from fear.
May I and all beings be free of fear and full of love.

For all that has been: Thanks!
For all that will be: Yes!
--Dag Hammarskjold

From: *When Love Meets Fear* by David Richo, Ph.D.

See davericho.com for information on tapes and books by Dr. David Richo.

Reading + Exercise 4-2: (continued)

What thoughts and feelings came up for you in the course of doing this exercise? What fears may influence your communication with others?

Reading + Exercise 4-3:
Trying Out The Cooperative Communication Skills EMERGENCY KIT
(a pocket guide to conflict resolution)

Introduction: "The Cooperative Communication Emergency Kit" evolved at the request of Dr. Paloma Pavel, a Bay Area psychologist who uses The Seven Challenges Workbook as a resource in her team-building work with hospital staffs. She said the Workbook is wonderful but that it is too long. She needed something to give people about conflict resolution and better communication that will fit on a single page, or even better, will fit on a card that folks can carry in their wallets. Then, when conflicts start, the card can remind people of problem-solving behaviors that are hard to remember in the heat of a dispute.

Many conflicts get worse than they actually need to be because the participants lose control of themselves and retreat into self-reinforcing patterns of attack and counterattack. Here are seven suggestions, drawn from the literature of conflict resolution and psychotherapy, that can help you navigate your way through everyday collisions of needs and come out still liking yourself and able to work with your "partners-in-conflict."

when a conflict starts, try these suggestions...

1. Calm yourself down by breathing very slowly and deeply. While breathing, think of a moment of great happiness in your life. Doing this will help you from feeling totally swallowed up by the current situation. It is not all of your life.

2. Think about what you really need. What is best in the long run for your mind, your body, your spirit, your workplace, your family, your community? Don't allow yourself to get distracted from your own goals and needs by what you may see as someone else's misdeeds.

3. Affirm anything that you and your partner-in-conflict might be able to agree on. Vividly imagine your partner-in-conflict as a potential ally. Imagine that you are marooned on a desert island with your partner-in-conflict, and that the long-term survival of both of you depends on the two of you cooperating in some sort of creative way that will meet more of both your needs. Then explore for areas where your interests and needs might overlap with the other person's.

4. Acknowledge and apologize for any mistakes you may have made in the course of the conflict. Others may do the same if you get the ball rolling. Make an accepting space for your partners-in-conflict to start over. Letting go of defending past mistakes can allow participants in a conflict to see their situation from fresh angles.

5. Summarize the other person's needs, feelings and position as fairly as you can, and do this first, before you present your own needs or requests. When people feel heard, they are more likely to listen.

6. Focus on positive goals for the present and the future, no matter what you and/or your partner-in-conflict may have said or done in the past. Punishing or shaming someone for past actions will not put that person in a frame of mind to meet your needs in the present. The present and future are all you can change.

7. Make requests for specific actions that another person could actually do, rather than for overall feelings or attitudes. Explain how the requested actions will help you, so that the other person feels powerful and respected in complying with your request.

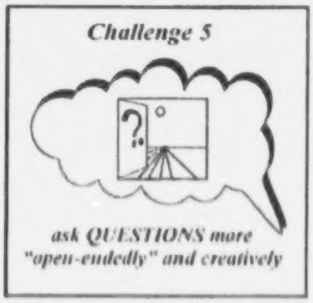
Reading + Exercise 4-3: (continued)

How would you have applied these steps to a recent conflict? Imagine how the conflict might have unfolded differently.

Challenge Five

ASKING QUESTIONS MORE "OPEN-ENDEDLY" AND MORE CREATIVELY.

Part 1: Asking questions more "open-endedly." (Summary repeated from Introduction) In order to coordinate our life and work with the lives and work of other people, we all need to know more of what other people are feeling and thinking, wanting and planning. But our usual "yes/no" questions actually tend to shut people up rather than opening them up. You can encourage your conversation partners to share more of their thoughts and feelings by asking "open-ended" rather than "yes/no" questions.[19] Open-ended questions allow for a wide range of responses. For example, asking "How did you like that food/movie/speech/doctor, etc.?" will evoke a more detailed response than "Did you like it?" (which could be answered with a simple "yes" or "no").


Challenge 5
ask QUESTIONS more "open-endedly" and creatively

Consider the difference between two versions of the same question, as each might occur in a conversation between two people in a close relationship:

> **"Well, honey, do you want to go ahead and rent that apartment we saw yesterday?"**

AND...

> **"Well, honey, how do you feel about us renting that apartment we saw yesterday?"**

The first version suggests a "yes" or "no" answer, favors "yes" and does not invite much discussion. A person hearing such a question may feel pressured to reach a decision, and may not make the best decision.

Both versions imply a suggestion to rent the apartment, but the second question is much more inviting of a wide range of responses. Even if our goal is to persuade, we can't do a good job of that unless we address our listener's concerns, and we won't understand those concerns unless we ask questions that invite discussion.

When your are under time pressure, it is tempting to push people to make "yes-no" decisions. But pressing forward without addressing people's concerns has played a key role in many on-the-job accidents and catastrophes (such as the Challenger Space Shuttle explosion).

On the next page you will find some examples of open-ended questions that could be helpful in:

- solving problems in a way that meets more of everyone's needs,
- getting to know and understand the people around you better, and
- simply creating richer and more satisfying conversations.

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[19] For more practical information on how to ask questions more fruitfully, see Chapter 5 of Gerald Goodman's *The Talk Book* (Emmaus, PA: Rodale Press, 1988).

EXAMPLES OF OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS:

"How comfortable are you with Plan B?"

"How could I modify this proposal to meet more of your requirements?"

"What kind of information do you need in order to go forward?"

"How did you like that movie?"

"What do you think about ... moving the office to Boston?"
(rather than **"Is it OK with you if we... ?"**)

"How are you feeling about all of this?"

"How ready are you to ...?"
(rather than **"Are you ready to ...?"**)

Exercise 5-1: Using questions to reach out. Take each of the examples given above and use it to write an open-ended question that includes some content from your life.

Exercise 5-2: Translating "yes-no" questions. Translate each of the following "yes-no" questions into an "open-ended" one. What problems can you imagine arising from each of the "yes-no" versions?

(On talking with a person who looks disappointed...) **"So you didn't like that, huh?"**

(A pilot to a new co-pilot...) **"D'you know how to fly this thing?"**

(A nurse to a patient...) **"Have you been taking your medication?"**

(Parent to teen...) **"Don't you think it would be better if you did your homework first?"**

What questions in your life could be translated into an open ended style and what would they sound like in that new style?

Part 2: Asking questions more creatively. (Summary repeated from Introduction) What sort of questions are truly worth asking? When we ask questions we are using a powerful language tool to *focus conversational attention* and *guide our interaction with others*. But many of the questions we have learned to ask are totally fruitless and self-defeating (such as, parents to pregnant teen, *"Why???!!! Why have you done this to us???!!!"*). In general it will be more fruitful to ask "how" questions about the future rather than "why" questions about the past, but there are many more creative possibilities as well. Of the billions of questions we might ask, not all are equally fruitful or illuminating; not all are equally helpful in solving problems together. In this section we will explore asking powerfully creative questions (with the help of researchers in many fields).

Please note: Some of the questions discussed below, if asked without any preparation, may be experienced by others as *demanding* or as *invading one's privacy*. Start by asking these questions of yourself first. Before asking them of others, practice the "introductions to a conversation" described in the Challenge Two chapter.

Question-asking in everyday life. As we wrestle with each new challenge in life, we ask ourselves and others a continuous stream of questions. Question-asking is one of the main ways that we try to get a grip on whatever is going on, but we are usually not very conscious of the quality of questions we ask.

"Why are you always such a jerk?"

or...

"How could we work together to solve this problem?"

As noted above, not all questions are of equal value. Many are a waste of effort but a few can be amazingly helpful. Learning to ask conscious, fruitful questions of others, of oneself, and about one's situation or task at hand, is an important part of the training of many professionals: psychotherapists,[20] engineers, architects,[21] mathematicians,[22] doctors and others. All of these groups ask deeply penetrating questions. They do so in order to apply a body of knowledge to solve problems in a way that respects the unique elements of each new situation, person, piece of land, broken leg, canyon to be bridged, and so on. (A structured kind of self-questioning is also part of the communal life of the Quakers, as I have observed in attending various Quaker meetings, and part of Jesuit religious practice, as a Jesuit friend shared with me.)

"How could I have been so stupid?"

or...

"What could I learn from this experience?"

A tool for everyone. Asking conscious, creative and exploratory questions is not just for professionals; it is for all of us. We are each engaged in the process of trying to build a better life, a better family, a better workplace, a better world, just as if we were trying to build the world's tallest building. We can apply in our own lives some of the styles of creative questioning that engineers use to build better bridges, psychotherapists use to help their clients and negotiators use to reach agreements.

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[20] This is especially true in narrative therapy. For dozens of inspiring examples see Jill Freedman and Gene Combs, *Narrative Therapy: The Social Construction of Preferred Realities.* New York: Norton, 1996. Chap. 5.

[21] Donald A. Schön describes this as a process of inquiry and reflection-in-action in *The Reflective Practitioner: How Professionals Think in Action.* New York: Basic Books, 1983.

[22] For a list of questions that constitute a method of solving mathematical problems, see George Polya, *How to Solve It: A New Aspect of Mathematical Method.* Garden City, New York: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1957, xvi.

How am I going to nail that slob?

or...

What would be best for me in this situation?

The many examples of exploratory questions given by Donald Schön in *The Reflective Practitioner*[23] suggest that we use questions to make a kind of 'space' in our minds for things we do not know yet (in the sense of understand), or have not decided yet, or have not invented yet, or have not discovered yet. "Hmmm," an architect might think, "how could we arrange this building so that it follows the contour of the land?"

The answer will involve a complex mix of discovering, inventing, understanding, and deciding, all pulled together partly by the creative power of the question. This thinking process is easier to imagine when we use visual examples, such as designing a house to blend into a hillside (but not cause a landslide!). But these same elements are present in all our cooperative problem-solving activities. Asking questions can allow us to start thinking about the unknown, because questions focus our attention, and provide a theme for continued exploration. Questions are like the mountain climber's hook-on-the-end-of-a-rope: we throw the hook into the unknown, and we pull ourselves into the future. But we need to learn how and where to throw, so that we pull ourselves into a better future.

How can I do this without anybody finding out?

or...

If I do what I am thinking about doing, what kind of person will that help to make me?

As far as I know, there is no straightforward set of rules about how to ask questions that are more helpful or more tuned to the needs of a particular situation. But you can get an intuitive sense of how to do it by studying a wide range of creative questions. The exercise that follows will give you a chance to try out some of the best questions ever asked.

Questions of power. In many situations you may not have the emotional, social or political power to ask creative questions. Political power often works to narrow the range of permissible questions and narrow the range of who is allowed to ask them. For example, it is difficult to get US decision-makers to consider the question "Now that the Cold War is over, why is the United States spending more money than ever on nuclear weapons?" Totalitarian governments, modern advertising agencies and abusive families all want us to obey in unthinking silence rather than to question and explore possibilities. Learning to ask creative questions, in a compassionate and conciliatory way, can be a large step forward in reclaiming your lost power as a person, a family member, a citizen and a problem-solver.

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[23] Schön, *The Reflective Practitioner*

Exercise 5-3: Expanding your tool kit of creative questions.

The list of questions presented below contains the most intense and creative questions I have been able to find, drawn from the works of many deep question-askers. Next to each question in the table below I have given the field in which I have encountered that question. Take each question on the list and imagine a situation in your life in which you might ask that question. This is a demanding exercise. You may want to break it up into several sessions. (In real life, as discussed in Chapter 2, it works better if you let people know what kind of conversation you want to have, before you start a conversation that includes challenging questions or intimate inquiries.)

Question	**Source fields**	**When and where you could ask these questions in your own life.**
1. How does this feel to me? 2. What (am I / are you) experiencing right now?	Gestalt therapy and general psychotherapy.	
3. How could I have done that differently? How could you have done that differently? 4. What could (I / you) learn from this... (situation, mistake, painful experience)?	General psychotherapy.	
5. What kind of explanations do I give myself when bad events happen? 6. How easy would it be for me to view this difficult situation as temporary, specific to one location and partly the result of chance?	Martin Seligman's research on learned helplessness, optimism and explanatory style.[24] *Note: Seligman found that over-generalizing plays a key role in making people feel depressed. When bad things happen, pessimists are more likely to say to themselves "That's how it will always be, everywhere." and "It's totally and completely my fault."*	

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[24] Martin E. P. Seligman, *Learned Optimism*. New York: Knopf, 1991.

A list of creative, exploratory questions (continued).

Question	**Source fields**	**When and where you could ask these questions in your own life.**
7. What is the most important thing that I want in this situation? 8. What solutions might bring everyone more of what they want? 9. What is my best alternative to a negotiated agreement? 10. What kind of self-fulfilling prophecy to I want to set in motion in this situation?	Conflict resolution, negotiation, management, especially *Getting to Yes*.[25] (Note: A self-fulfilling prophecy is a stance that generates its own validation. For example, a person walking down a crowded street screaming "You will not like me!" at passersby is making their statement come true.)	
11. What possibilities would be suggested if I were to look at this situation as if it were an airplane... a car... a circus... a movie... a Broadway musical..., etc.? 12. What does this situation remind me of?	Creative problem-solving in the arts, architecture, engineering and management.[26]	
13. If I do what I am thinking about doing, what kind of person will that help to make me?	Social constructionist communication theory. *(Note: In the social constructionist view of being a person, a sense of self is the overarching story that persons tell to make sense out of their actions and the events of their lives. Each of* *our* *actions supports the development of some stories and inhibits the development of others.)*	

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[25] Fisher, Ury and Patton, *Getting to Yes.*
[26] Schön, *The Reflective Practitioner.*

A list of creative, exploratory questions (continued).

Question	**Source fields**	**When and where you could ask these questions in your own life.**
14. What were the times like when we all got along together just fine, when we didn't have this problem? How did that work and what did that feel like? 15. (focusing on success) Looking back on this accomplishment, what seem to be the turning points that made this possible? 16. What were all the details of that moment of success? 17. Reviewing all these moments of success up to now, what kind of future could be possible?	Narrative therapy.[27] (These are typical questions from narrative therapy that I have translated into a first person inquiry.) *Note: The central concern of narrative therapy is that the stories we tell ourselves to make sense of our lives and our life difficulties tend to leave out the kinds of events in our lives that might support a more energizing story. Narrative therapy tries to bring these "sparkling moments" into the foreground of attention, and to use them as a basis for creating a story that emphasizes strength and resourcefulness rather than illness, dysfunction and disability.*	

Your notes on asking questions more creatively:

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[27] Freedman and Combs, *Narrative Therapy.*

Reading 5-1:
Radical Questions for Critical Times
by Sam Keen, PhD

Rumor has it that on leaving the Garden of Eden, Adam said to Eve: "My dear, we are living in an age of transition." Ordinarily, life proceeds ordinarily. We dwell securely within the garden of the protective myths, values, and paradigms of our society; our questions are about making a living, purchasing the things we have been taught to desire, raising our children, and keeping up with the neighbors. But times of crisis challenge our comfortable assumptions about who we are and force us to ask more radical questions. Carl Jung reached such a point at midlife when he realized that he didn't know what myth he had been living.

Since permanent change is here to stay and crises and transitions are an inevitable part of the human condition, a wise person will hone some of the skills necessary for thriving in troubled times. Think of the crises every Adam and Eve must negotiate as composed of three interlocking circles: identity crises, love crises, social crises. It follows that the radical questions we most need to ask in times of transition (when our world is burning) are those addressed to the solitary self, those concerning the intimate relationship between I and thou, and those that have to do with the commonwealth within which we live and move and have our being.

Herewith, a selection to get you started. (Please send others that trouble, challenge, and inspire you to: Sam Keen, 16331 Norrbom Rd. Sonoma, California 95476)

Cross-Examining the Self

What is happening to me?
What comes next for me?
What is the source and meaning of my restlessness, dissatisfaction, longing, anxiety?
What do I really desire?
What have I not brought forth that is within me?
What have I contributed to life?
What are my gifts? My vocation?
What ought I to do? Who says?
What does my dream-self know that "I" don't?
What story, myth, values, authorities, institutions inform my life?
What is my ultimate concern?
How faithful am I to my best vision of myself?
At whose expense has my wealth, security, and happiness been purchased?

Questions for I and Thou

Whom do I love?
By whom am I loved?
Am I more loved or loving?
How intimate are we?
How close is close enough?
What are we doing together?
Do we help each other broaden and deepen the reach of our caring, to become more compassionate?
What clandestine emotions fear, anger, resentment, guilt, shame, sorrow, desire for revenge - keep us from being authentic with each other?
When do our vows and promises become a prison from which I and thou must escape to preserve the integrity of our separate beings?
Can we renew our passion and commitment?
When is it time to say goodbye?

Probing the Commonwealth

Who is included within the "we," the community, the polls that encompasses and defines my being?
Who is my neighbor?

For whom, beyond the circle of my family, do I care?
Who are my enemies?
To what extremes would I go to defend my country?
Can I be just, loving, merciful, and be loyal to my profession, my corporation, my country?
If we were to measure our success by Gross National Happiness (the national standard of Bhutan) how would our economic, political, educational, and religious institutions change?
What would have to happen to convince sovereign nations to wage peace rather than expending their wealth and creativity in producing more deadly and genocidal weapons?

If you doubt that asking a new question is a royal road to revolution, transformation, and renewal, consider what happened when Descartes asked, "Of what may I be certain?" or when Newton asked, "How is a falling apple like a rising moon?" or when Marx asked, "Why were men born free but are everywhere in chains?" or when Freud asked, "What is the meaning of dreams?"

Your question is the quest you're on. No questions — no journey. Timid questions — timid trips. Radical questions — an expedition to the root of your being. Bon voyage.

Sam Keen, philosopher, teacher and author, has written many books about being human, including *Apology for Wonder*, *Fire in the Belly*, *To Love and Be Loved*, and *Faces of the Enemy: Reflections of the Hostile Imagination.* The above article is reprinted here with the author's permission. *(The Cooperative Communication Skills extended community thanks Dr. Keen for contributing this exercise to the Workbook and the www.coopcomm.org online library. For information on Sam Keen's latest workshops, books and projects visit www.samkeen.com.)*

Your thoughts about this article and the creative questions of your life:

Challenge Six

EXPRESSING MORE APPRECIATION

SUMMARY(repeated from Introduction): In order to build more satisfying relationships with the people around you, express more appreciation, delight, affirmation, encouragement and gratitude.

Because life continually requires us to attend to problems and breakdowns, it gets very easy to see in life only what is broken and needs fixing. But satisfying relationships (and a happy life) require us to notice and respond to what is delightful, excellent, enjoyable, to work well done, to food well cooked, etc.

It is appreciation that makes a relationship strong enough to accommodate differences and disagreements. Thinkers and researchers in many different fields have reached a similar conclusion: healthy relationships need a core of mutual appreciation.

Challenge 6

express more appreciation, delight and encouragement

Expressing more appreciation is probably the most powerful and rewarding of the steps described in this workbook, and it is one of the most demanding. Some writers on the subject go so far as to propose that gratefulness is key to a happy life and peace with God! (If only how to get there were so clear!) Expressing appreciation is certainly a much more personal step than, say, learning to ask open-ended questions.

To express gratitude in a meaningful way, a person needs to actually feel grateful, and that often involves looking at a person or situation from a new angle. Expressing appreciation thus involves both an expressive action and an inner attitude. So this chapter includes both exercises in how to express appreciation and also a lot of background information to help you explore your attitudes about gratefulness. My hope for this chapter is that it will help to put "Explore and Express More Appreciation" on your lifetime Do List. Unfortunately, there is no button in our brains that we can push to make ourselves instantly more grateful and appreciative. But there are countless opportunities each day to grow in that direction.

RESEARCH ON THE POWER OF APPRECIATION AND GRATEFULNESS

Couples. If, like me, you have not given much attention to the topic of appreciation, you will probably be as amazed as I was to learn the results of recent research on appreciation. What researchers call "positive interactions" are at the heart of good marriages, healthy development in children and successful businesses! For example, researchers at the University of Washington have discovered that couples who stay together tend to have ***five times*** more positive interactions than negative ones.[28] Couples who stay together often have real disagreements, but a strong pattern of appreciative and affirming interaction appears to give them the positive momentum they need to work through their problems.

Bringing up kids. The child development research of Betty Hart and Todd Risley produced a strikingly parallel conclusion regarding parent-child interaction. "They found that children who are the most intelligent, self-confident and flexible ... at ages six to eight had experienced five times more positive than negative interchanges with their parents by age three"[29] By age three, the children who would thrive had received an average of around 500,000 positive interactions! (The most important implication of the Hart and Risley research for this workbook is that *appreciation nurtures!* Self-esteem in both children and adults contains a large component of internalized appreciation. It is never too late to begin listening and appreciating, and paying attention to the qualities and behaviors you want to encourage in others.)

Creating successful businesses. In his book for managers, *Bringing Out the Best in People*,[30] management consultant Aubrey Daniels argues that recognition and appreciation are the most powerful motivators of improved performance. But in spite of this many managers are still more focused on punishing the low performers than on recognizing the high performers. Building a successful business means most of all bringing out the best in people, according to Daniels, and only people-oriented positive reinforcement, in the form of appreciation, recognition and gratitude, can do that.

Living more gratefully. In his book, *Gratefulness, the Heart of Prayer,*[31] Brother David Steindl-Rast suggests that spiritual life makes much more sense if we see all spiritual virtues as radiating out from gratefulness. To be grateful for the goodness of the simplest things, bread baked by an neighbor, the turning of the seasons, the sound of water running in a brook, the sound of children playing in a schoolyard, is to affirm that there is a source of goodness in life, in spite of the many sorrows that life also includes. For Brother David, our gratefulness is our deepest prayer, prayed not with words but with our hearts.

EXPLORING THE DEEPER SIDE OF GRATEFULNESS

Gratitude as a way of seeing. The only problem with all these great discoveries in favor of gratitude is that appreciation and gratitude are not like mental faucets that we can just turn on at will. Gratefulness has two sides. Expressing gratitude is partly a conscious action, like opening a door or telling a story. It is also a result of deep attitudes: *the way we look at our lives* and *the way we turn the events of our lives into meaningful stories.* Parents teach their children to say "thank you," the action part, in the hope that their children will grow into the attitude part. For adults, I believe, the path toward gratitude includes an exploration of both.

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[28] See *Lifeskills,* by Virginia and Redford Williams. New York: Random House, 1977. Pg. 100, and *Why Marriages Succeed or Fail*, by John Gottman with Nan Silver. New York: Simon & Shuster, 1994.

[29] *Lifeskills.* by Virginia and Redford Williams. New York: Random House, 1977. Pg. 101.

[30] *Bringing Out the Best in People*, by Aubrey C. Daniels. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1994.

[31] *Gratefulness, the Heart of Prayer, An Approach to Life in Fullness*, by David Steindl-Rast. Ramsey, NJ: Paulist Press, 1984.

Stories, suffering and gratitude. Human beings need to make sense out of what can be a bewildering variety of life experiences. Life is not particularly consistent. Joy comes one day, sorrow the next. Success alternates with failure. Sometimes our efforts matter a lot and sometimes it is a matter of luck, good or bad. One of the main ways we bring coherence to this mind-boggling variety is to develop our own personal organizing "themes" such as "my life of adventure" or "my struggle with alcohol." Since no one theme can hold all the events in our lives, we pick out and emphasize the experiences that illustrate our main theme and let all the other events fade into the background.

Most people do not consciously pick their themes. We more often borrow them from our parents, or are pushed into them by powerful events in our lives such as love, war, abuse, success or failure. A former soldier might weave his life story around the theme of "I went to Vietnam and got totally messed up." Another soldier from the same combat unit might organize his life around the theme "In my family we get through difficult times by staying close." These two men might have experienced the same horrors of war, but their different themes are going to keep them *looking for* and *paying attention to* different kinds of experiences in the present.

The important thing to remember about themes is that although they may be deeply true, they are never all of the truth about a person's life or about life in general. Life is always larger than all our stories, and the events of a person's life can be arranged, with effort, to illustrate many different themes, not just one. This fact can open a path toward gratitude, even for people who have endured great suffering and deprivation.

Exploring a new theme: Receiving each day as a gift. Becoming aware that our themes emphasize some events in our lives and ignore many others can be a real jolt. But this jolt can empower us to explore more energizing and more life-supporting story-lines. In offering for your consideration the theme of *receiving each day as a gift*, I draw on the inspiring work of two monks, Brother David Steindl-Rast, a Catholic, and Thich Nhat Hanh, a Buddhist, who are modern apostles of the grateful heart. I also draw on the many wonderful current writers on the topic of narrative therapy.[32]

With great inner kindness we can thank the themes that have helped us make sense of life up to now (they were the best we could do), and gently move toward themes that emphasize more of the good things that have happened in our lives and the directions in which we want to grow. This conscious work on developing a new story will make it easier for us to see opportunities for appreciation in all our daily environments (work, home, community).

One possible first step in receiving each day as a gift is to think of *any* days in your life that have felt like gifts or blessings. This can be even more helpful if you write down these wonderful times as part of developing a journal of gratitude. Slowly, over weeks and months, you can begin to feel out an alternative way of telling the story of your life. I will never forget the smell of Christmas trees in our living room when I was a child. And the glow of the multi-colored lights when all the other lights in the room had been turned off. So in spite of the fact that I was part of a troubled family, I had moments of amazing wonder and delight, and those moments became an inner treasure for me that helped me endure the troubles.

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[32] For a very engaging example of the narrative therapy approach, see *Narrative Therapy: The Social Construction of Preferred Realities*, by Jill Freedman and Gene Combs. New York: Norton, 1996.

If we were to think about it rationally, we would have to admit that the fact that gratitude-inspiring events do happen in our lives at least every now and then is proof beyond a shadow of a doubt that happy events are possible! If we pay more attention to such experiences we might find that we gradually become more willing to be surprised by new moments of joy. We might even find that events which we previously ignored, like the sun coming up in the morning, can start to seem like gifts, even miracles! All of this is not to say that we should deny or blot out the actual difficulties in our lives. But if we could find a way of giving our hearts and minds many small moments of rest from our problems, I believe we would find that we could work on them more creatively and more effectively. *(Text continues after exercise below.)*

Exercise 6-1: Events to be grateful for. Set aside at least 15 minutes and write down the ten happiest events in your life (or as many as you can think of). This can include both specific events, such as winning a much-desired prize, and also particular people who have been a blessing in your life. Notice your mood at the end of writing down all these events and/or persons, and write that down, too.

Thank you equals yes to life. Another possible step in cultivating a grateful heart is to look for small ways to say thank you to total strangers. When you are in a restaurant and the food tastes good, say something about it to the person who is serving you. When I get out of the dentist's chair, I thank the person who has just spent half an hour of their life trying with great effort and discipline to make sure that my teeth stay in my head. I have spent many an afternoon in front of some market gathering signatures for one cause or another, so when I see someone gathering signatures for a cause I support, I walk up to them and say "Thank you for being here." The possibilities are endless.

Behind this practice is the fact that, for me, my long history as an anti-nuclear advocate has required me to say "no" a great deal, and to say "no" very thoughtfully and consistently for years on end, a deep and heartfelt "no" to leaking waste tanks, contaminated water, radiation-induced cancers and so on. I realized some years ago that I seemed to be losing my capacity to say "yes." My practice of thanking people whenever I get the chance is my way of saying yes to life in small installments.

Expressing gratitude in the middle of a difficult life. Considered on a wider level, part of the problem of suffering and oppression is that people who are oppressed tend to become obsessed with the source of their suffering. Whether the oppressing force is nuclear weapons, an alcoholic parent, a chronic illness or a boss in a sweatshop, the oppressor tends to become the central feature in the oppressed person's life story. In this context, the practice of gratitude can be seen as a deep resistance to having one's life taken over.

A dear friend of mine, bedridden for years with a debilitating disease, has learned to find sustaining comfort in the stars that shine through her windows at night. She has become grateful for the galaxies, and is filled with wonder that the universe created her, limited though her movements may be. This kind of experience suggests to me that moments of gratitude, and expressing more appreciation for one another, do not have to mean that we are saying everything in life is just fine. Quite to the contrary, in opening ourselves to experience even the smallest delight and gratitude we can be gathering strength to change what needs to be changed in our lives. And to struggle with our difficult life assignments.

Ultimately, it is even possible to give thanks for one's troubles. The difficulties of our lives, after all, challenge us to become deeper people, more aware and more compassionate. We would not grow without them, as Judith Viorst explains with great kindness in her book *Necessary Losses*.[33] But this is a very advanced form of gratitude and probably not the best place to begin, just as you would not try to climb Mt. Everest as your very first experience of hiking. I also doubt that it is fruitful to preach to others that they should be more grateful for their painful challenges. This lesson is best taught by our own example. By practicing gratitude in many small ways, we can learn from our own life experience how to go deeper. In the following section we explore one possible way of expressing this everyday appreciation more consciously and more clearly

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[33] *Necessary Losses*, by Judith Viorst. New York: Ballantine Books, 1987.

EXPLORING THREE-PART APPRECIATIONS

The inner structure of appreciation. In Chapter 3 of this workbook, I introduced the "Five Messages" model as a way of under-standing what we need to tell people in order for them to understand us better. Good listening involves the listener reconstructing the speaker's experience. That can be done a lot more easily when speakers share all five of the basic dimensions of their experience. Here is an example of a fully expressed experience of appreciation, using all of the messages in the Five Messages model to express the various aspects.

STARTING WITH THE FIVE MESSAGES IN ACTION

The Five Messages	express:	Example:
seeing, hearing...	1. What are you seeing, hearing or otherwise sensing? (facts only)	**"When I saw my paycheck in the mailbox today...**
and feeling...	2. What emotions are you feeling?	**...I felt really relieved...**
because I...	3. What interpretations, wants, needs, memories or anticipations of yours support those feelings?	**...because I need to pay my rent tomorrow morning...**
and now I want...	4. What action, information or commitment do you want now?	**...and I want to run down to the bank and deposit it right now...**
so that...	5. What positive results will that action, information or commitment lead to in the future? (no threats)	**...so that my rent check will clear if my landlord cashes it tomorrow."**

Note: My deep appreciation goes to the work of Marshall Rosenberg[34] for helping me to understand messages 1 through 4, and to the work of Sharon and Gordon Bower[35] for helping me understand message 5.

Although the Five Messages model has a space for everything, many expressions of appreciation do not need Messages 4 and 5. Most expressions of gratitude convey a message of satisfaction that is not necessarily connected to any future actions (*and now I want*)or anticipations of positive results (*so that*). Every now and then you may need to include Messages 4 and 5 in order to express your feelings in a complex situation, but as you can see in the examples on the next page, Three-Part Appreciations really can tell the whole story in most situations.

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[34] Marshall Rosenberg, *A Model for Nonviolent Communication*. Philadelphia: New Society Publishers. 1983

[35] Sharon Anthony Bower and Gordon H. Bower, *Asserting Yourself: A Practical Guide for Positive Change.* Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley. 1976

EXPLORING EXAMPLES OF THREE-PART APPRECIATIONS

1. When I saw/heard...	*2. I felt...*	*3. because I...(need, want, interpret, associate, etc.)*
When I saw the flowers on the table...	**...I felt so grateful to you...**	**...because the flowers reminded me of all the nice things you do around here"**
"When I tasted those strawberry pancakes...	**...I felt amazed and delighted...**	**...because I don't remember ever tasting pancakes so good in my whole life!"**
"When I heard you reading the Blue Burp story to Susie and Jimmy...	**...I felt a quite kind of happiness...**	**...because I know how much the kids love that story."**
"When I saw how neatly the tools were hung up in the garage...	**...I felt very thankful...**	**...because I hate it when I'm in the middle of a job and I can't find the tools I need."**
"When I saw Big Joe #37 hit that home run all the way out of the park...	**...man! I was really excited...**	**...because I thought the Wranglers had a chance of winning the game after all."**
"When I finally got a call through to you in San Francisco...	**...I was so relieved and happy...**	**...because I had been worrying that you had been hurt in the earthquake."**
"When I felt you put your arm around me at Aunt Nell's funeral...	**...I felt very appreciative...**	**...because I was feeling really awful at just then and needed some comfort."**
"When I smelled that chicken cooking in the kitchen...	**...I felt soooooo happy...**	**...because I didn't get any lunch today and I am really hungry."**

"I-Statement" appreciations versus positive judgments. One very important aspect of Three-Part Appreciations is that the appreciator is sharing the details of her or his experience of another person's action. These are quite different statements than saying "You are wonderful!", "You are such a great guy.", "You are the greatest cook in the world.", "You are so beautiful." and so on. Although such statements sound like the highest praise, there can be a big gap between what they intend to convey and how they are actually received by others. Here are three reasons why.

First of all, even though these are positive judgments, they still put the recipient in the position of being judged and the praise-giver in the position of judge, which is not necessarily a chair you want to sit in. Many people have experienced an unhappy lifetime of being judged by others, sometimes harshly, sometimes erratically, with the effect of making all judgments an unpleasant experience.

Secondly, notice how in the "You are so beautiful"-type statements the person doing the appreciating has disappeared. These are actually very impersonal statements. There is no "I feel" to anchor the feelings as belonging specifically to the giver of appreciation. One popular song said it better by at least saying *"You are so beautiful...to me!"*, making it more personal. Another popular song said it much better by saying *"Sometimes... all I need is the air that I breathe and to love you,"* which would bring the listener much closer to the speaker's experience. This is a moving statement of appreciation because it connects the "I" with the "you" very creatively in the same sentence.

And finally, "You are wonderful"-type statements are often vague and may lack descriptive richness and meaning. The person being appreciated has to do a lot of mental work trying to figure our exactly what about them is being appreciated. It would be more informative if I were to say something like "I love the way you take care of all the trees on your farm." or "I love the way the sun shines through your hair." By comparison, you can hear how Three-Part Appreciations say much more than that.

Challenge Six - Conclusion. I hope these ideas, examples and arguments have intrigued you about the possibilities of expressing deeper appreciation to the important people in your life, to the web of life that sustains us all, and for all the simple things that could delight us if we let them. Part of that process involves seeing with new eyes: standing back from the struggles and troubles of everyday life and making a space to notice what is good, healthy and delightful. Another part of the process involves expressing appreciation more mindfully and more self-revealingly. The reward for all this effort will be that the people you like will really understand that you like them. You will not always need the three-part format, but mastering it to the point where you can produce Three-Part Appreciations at a moment's notice, to the point where you truly "know it by heart," will greatly expand your vocabulary of appreciation. The exercise on the next page will help.

Exercise 6-2: Using the form on the next page to get started, compose several Three-Part Appreciation messages intended for family members, friends and/or co-workers. Continue with the practice by writing two Three-Part Appreciations in a notebook or journal every day. Little by little, begin saying them to people. (To get someone's attention, use the conversational openers explored in the Challenge 2 chapter.)

EXERCISE 6-2: EXPRESSING APPRECIATION IN THREE PARTS

1. When I saw/heard...	*2. ...I felt...*	*3. because I...(need, want, interpret, associate, etc.)*

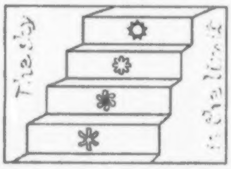
Your notes on this exercise:

Challenge Seven

SEEING EVERY CONVERSATION AS AN OPPORTUNITY TO LEARN -- MAKING BETTER COMMUNICATION AN IMPORTANT PART OF EVERYDAY LIVING

Developing faith in your own development. In this chapter I hope to get you excited about the *possibilities of practice* and *the horizons of personal development*. That probably sounds about as exciting as washing dishes. But, as far as I have been able to figure it out, better listening and better self-expression are very similar to better basketball-playing, better guitar-playing and better everything else. They all develop through attention, practice and faith. People everywhere plant and tend the vegetables in their gardens with the faith that there will be a harvest. Musicians practice every day with the faith that their skills will improve.

Challenge 7



to see each conversation in our lives as an opportunity to become more skillful and compassionate persons

In order for us to invest the necessary time and effort required to become radiantly successful communicators, it is vital to develop a faith in the possibilities of our own development (and in the development of our families, and of all the teams of which we are members). At their best, parents and coaches believe in us so that we can learn to believe in ourselves. As your coach via the printed page, I hope the information in this chapter (and readings) will support you in believing in yourself more deeply, so that you will practice enough to discover your own many capacities for skillfulness and excellence.

Practice matters more than talent

A recent statistical analysis of Olympic gold medal winners produced a result that is both startling and reassuring. The single most important factor in winning a gold medal was having practiced longer than one's competitors. The analysis showed that the winners had consistently started to practice their skills earlier in life than everyone else in the contests. The evidence strongly suggests that gold medal winners are not necessarily more talented than everybody else. They just work much harder and much longer at being athletes than everyone else does. What this implies is that, with practice, most skills are within the reach of most people.[36]

Over-learning. There is an important psychological principle at work in all skill development and that principle is called *over-learning*. If we learn something just well enough to do it once successfully, we will not actually remember how to do it for very long. To master a skill, we have to practice it a lot more than would seem necessary. In order to remember better communication skills in the middle of arguments and tense negotiations, a person needs to feel very competent and comfortable in using those skills, just as an accomplished musician can play musical scales without even thinking about it. (Even the greatest of musicians still practice many hours a week.) The reward for practicing your communication skills is that you will feel better about yourself and your connections to the people around you, and be able to face conflict situations more confidently. You will probably also be able to get more of what you want -- by being skillful enough to help your partners in living and working get more of what they want, too.

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[36] From an article in the New York Times, October 11, 1994.

Complex skills...
...need practice to improve.

Doing what comes naturally. It might seem as though we ought to be able to get through life by just "doing what comes naturally," that we should not have to try so hard. I certainly wish that were possible. But if you stop to reflect on how humans learn to talk, it is clear that, as far as communication skills are concerned, we are born knowing how to cry, how to grunt, and how to learn everything else. That's about it. Almost all of what seems 'natural' to us now is the result of intense learning all through our lives. As natural as it may feel to use sarcasm or ask self-defeating questions, these are actions we learned by copying others. We can learn new skills that will in time feel as natural as the old ones. In fact, learning new skills is the most natural thing in the world. It is what we are designed to do as creatures with big brains and multipurpose hands.

Exercise: A homework assignment for the rest of our lives. A big part of mastering the communication skills described in this workbook is learning to see opportunities to practice them, and learning to link together long chains of the six conversational actions described in chapters 1 through 6. This involves seeing everyday conversations and disagreements in a new light, seeing them as opportunities to learn, grow, practice your skills and enjoy being skillful. On the following page you will find my list (one interpretation, of course) of the basic situations in which people talk and listen, seen as opportunities to grow. Each of these situations represents an open horizon: there is no limit to how much awareness, skill, and compassion we can bring into each of these communication activities. And there is no limit to how good we can feel when we do them well. Our homework assignment for this Challenge is to continue the process that began at the moment of our births: to keep on learning about the life that lives between us. One way of helping that learning happen is to keep a journal of your experiences as you try new ways of listening and expressing yourself, new ways of asking questions and expressing appreciation. You can think of your journal as a patient listener who is available twenty-four hours a day! In addition to daily learnings, your journal can be a place where you make periodic reviews of your progress. For example, how do you feel about your overall level of skill, satisfaction and development in each of the activities listed on the following page? If you write down your answers to this life-inventory every year or two in your journal, you will begin to see more clearly the dimensions of your own life journey.

CONVERSATION: CREATING THE LIFE THAT LIVES BETWEEN US
(and within us, too)

Talking about my thoughts, feelings, experiences and wants with the people who are close to me in my life...
directions of possible development>>> ...in ways that express more of what is going on inside of me and in ways that are easier for my listeners to understand and empathize with.

Listening to people share their experiences, thoughts, feelings...
directions of possible development>>> ...more carefully, expressing more acknowledgment, responding in ways that confirm to my partners-in-conversation that I have understood their experiences.

Talking with people to express my appreciation of them...
directions of possible development>>> ...in a richer and more complete vocabulary, that allows people to understand more of my satisfaction and delight with them and with what they have done.

Talking with people to resolve my conflicts with them...
directions of possible development>>> ...speaking in ways that express more of my needs without attacking my partners-in-conflict, listening in ways that help my partners-in-conflict express more of their needs without attacking me.

Talking and listening to coordinate my actions with the actions of the important people in my life (at home, in work, in community projects, etc.)...
directions of possible development>>> ...by expressing myself more clearly and listening more carefully to increase the level of mutual understanding. Also, by learning to discuss difficult topics without criticizing my listeners, learning to translate my own and other people's criticisms into requests for action, and learning to ask questions more creatively..

Communicating with myself through journal writing and "inner conversations"...
directions of possible development>>>
...in ways that allow me to get a clearer picture of what's happening in my life, to feel more present in my life, to accept and forgive myself more, to imagine and plan the next step in my life, etc.

Listening and clarifying the issues as a mediator between people in conflict...
directions of possible development>>> ...as an extension of all the above, listening in a more responsive way, that confirms to each speaker that I have understood his or her experiences and feelings; encouraging and coaching each of the partners-in-conflict to listen to the other and to express wants and needs as actions requests rather than attacks on the other. Acting as a mediator generally requires training and practice. (The skills described in this workbook are key elements in the process of mediation.)

Learning to bring out the best in myself and others in and through conversation. Conversations are one of most important activities in which we become deeper and more fully realized persons. (See essay on page 7-8.) Conversations express our character, but they also create our character as we listen and speak...

(directions of possible development>>>)

... *more awarely (of self, other and context)*

... *more skillfully, competently and wisely*

... *more honestly, sincerely, genuinely, congruently (inner matches outer)*

... *more caringly, compassionately, acceptingly, respectfully, warmly, forgivingly*

... *more creatively and "exploratorily" (with more creative openness to new experience)*

... *more courageously, hopefully and faithfully*

... *more generously and nurturingly, delighting in the happiness of others*

... *more meaningfully and expressively, organizing and expressing our experiences in coherent patterns of words, music, movement and imagery*

... *more gratefully and appreciatively, open to delight and the gift of each moment*

... *more engagingly, energetically and responsively*

... *more gracefully and beautifully (in the Navajo sense of beauty as cosmic harmony)*

Upward and onward! As you can see from the list above, the qualities of good conversations shade off into the deeper qualities of being a person. The adverbs that apply to conversations (honestly, courageously) become the adjective of someone's character (honest, courageous, etc.) I am deeply convinced that we become persons largely in and through our communication with other persons. For some interesting explorations of the power of communication, please see the readings at the end of this chapter.

In the *Suggestions for Further Study* at the end of this workbook I have listed the books from which much of this workbook has been developed. Among the many approaches expressed in these books there are sure to be some that will help you continue your quest for better communication and conflict resolution skills. I urge you to study these books with friends and colleagues and I hope they will expand your life as much as they have expanded mine.

Perspectives on the power of communication – Reading 7-1:

Keep On Singing, Michael

Posted on the Internet by Joan Levy, MSW, ACSW, LCSW
The Body Mind & Breath Center of Kauai,
PO Box 160, Kapaa, Kauai, HI 96746

Like any good mother, when Karen found out that another baby was on the way, she did what she could to help her 3-year-old son, Michael, prepare for a new sibling. They find out that the new baby is going to be a girl, and day after day, night after night, Michael sings to his sister in Mommy's tummy.

The pregnancy progresses normally for Karen, an active member of the Panther Creek United Methodist Church in Morristown, Tennessee. Then the labor pains come. Every five minutes ... every minute. But complications arise during delivery. Hours of labor. Would a C-section be required?

Finally, Michael's little sister is born. But she is in serious condition. With siren howling in the night, the ambulance rushes the infant to the neonatal intensive care unit at St. Mary's Hospital, Knoxville, Tennessee. The days inch by. The little girl gets worse. The pediatric specialist tells the parents, "There is very little hope. Be prepared for the worst."

Karen and her husband contact a local cemetery about a burial plot. They have fixed up a special room in their home for the new baby - now they plan a funeral.

Michael keeps begging his parents to let him see his sister, "I want to sing to her," he says.

Week two in Intensive Care: It looks as if a funeral will come before the week is over. Michael keeps nagging about singing to his sister, but kids are never allowed in Intensive Care. But Karen makes up her mind. She will take Michael whether they like it or not. If he doesn't see his sister now, he may never see her alive.

She dresses him in an oversized scrub suit and marches him into ICU. He looks like a walking laundry basket, but the head nurse recognizes him as a child and bellows, "Get that kid out of here now! No children are allowed in ICU." The mother rises up strong in Karen, and the usually mild-mannered lady glares steel-eyed into the head nurse's face, her lips a firm line. "He is not leaving until he sings to his sister!"

Karen tows Michael to his sister's bedside. He gazes at the tiny infant losing the battle to live. And he begins to sing. In the pure-hearted voice of a 3-year-old, Michael sings: "You are my sunshine, my only sunshine, you make me happy when skies are gray --- "

Instantly the baby girl responds. The pulse rate becomes calm and steady. Keep on singing, Michael. "You never know, dear, how much I love you, Please don't take my sunshine away---" The ragged, strained breathing becomes as smooth as a kitten's purr. Keep on singing, Michael. "The other night, dear, as I lay sleeping, I dreamed I held you in my arms..."

Michael's little sister relaxes as rest, healing rest, seems to sweep over her. Keep on singing, Michael. Tears conquer the face of the bossy head nurse. Karen glows. "You are my sunshine, my only sunshine. Please don't, take my sunshine away."

Funeral plans are scrapped. The next day -- the very next day -- the little girl is well enough to go home! Woman's Day magazine called it "the miracle of a brother's song." The medical staff just called it a miracle. Karen called it a miracle of God's love. [*Workbook editor's note: Dennis Rivers calls it the power of appreciation expressed!*]

Perspectives on the power of communication – Reading 7-2:

Guy Louis Gabaldon -- a compassionate warrior saves the lives of a thousand people

(Excerpted and adapted from an 8/31/98 story in the Los Angeles Times by David Reyes. Copyright 1998 by the Los Angeles Times. Reprinted with permission.)

Pete Limon, a retired San Clemente businessman, has never met World War II hero Guy Louis Gabaldon, but he feels as if he knows him--so much so that he is on a personal mission to see that Gabaldon gets the recognition Limon feels he deserves.

Guy Louis Gabaldon at 18.

Limon and others in the Latino community want to see Gabaldon awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor for exploits that earned him the Navy Cross and that were depicted in the 1960 movie "Hell to Eternity."

"I feel [Gabaldon] should have been granted the Medal of Honor," Limon said,- "but he was slighted because of his Mexican descent."

Limon, 74, and Gabaldon, 72, have much in common. Both are Latino, natives of Southern California. Both saw combat in the war--Limon is a Pearl Harbor survivor. Both became successful businessmen: Limon a hotelier, Gabaldon a seafood merchant.

Limon said he has been fascinated for decades by the story of Gabaldon, whose heroics Mexican American veterans regard as equaling those of Audie Murphy, the most decorated U.S. soldier of World War II.

"I got involved in this project because, as a survivor of Pearl Harbor, I had this tremendous hate for the Japanese," Limon said. "Then I heard about Gabaldon and I softened."

Gabaldon, who served in the Western Pacific, was commended for having captured hundreds of Japanese prisoners -- mostly by persuasion.

His citation for the Navy Cross reads: "Working alone in front of the lines, he daringly entered enemy caves, pillboxes, buildings and jungle brush, frequently in the face of hostile fire, and succeeded in not only obtaining vital military information but in capturing well over one thousand civilians and troops."

Gabaldon's most effective weapon was his command of the Japanese language, which he learned as a child in East Los Angeles. One of seven children growing up in a tiny house, Gabaldon spent much of his time on the streets, where he was befriended by two Japanese-American brothers. Fascinated by their customs, he began spending time at their home and eventually moved in with them. He lived with his foster family for six years, learning their language and traditions, until the war broke out [in 1941] and they were sent to an internment camp. Gabaldon, then 17, joined the Marine Corps.

He was ... [sent to fight in the battle for] Saipan, one of the Mariana Islands [and a scene of some of the most intense fighting in World War II]. That is where he lives now, having owned businesses in California and Mexico over the years but finally returning to Saipan.

Speaking by telephone from there last week, Gabaldon related his wartime experience: On his first day in combat, he killed 33 Japanese soldiers but was then overcome with remorse. He took a new tack: He began going out alone and [speaking the Japanese he had learned in his adopted family] persuading Japanese soldiers to surrender to him, telling them they would be treated well, given food, water and medical care.

He would capture six soldiers at gunpoint but release three, telling them to spread the word about fair treatment as POWs. He would release them with a warning: "If they didn't come back, I would blast the hell out of the three left behind."

That was a ruse, but it worked. That was how he managed to take 800 prisoners in a single day.

Gabaldon harbors some bitterness over the Marine Corps' decision to award him the Silver Star instead of the Medal of Honor. Though his citation was upgraded to the Navy Cross after "Hell to Eternity" spawned a letter-writing campaign on his behalf, he has questions.

Gabaldon said he doesn't want the award "because I'm a Latino," but does feel that an explanation is in order, given his military record.

Gabaldon said he captured more prisoners than Sgt. Alvin York, who received the Medal of Honor after he killed 25 German soldiers and captured 132 in France in 1918.

"No Mexican American was awarded a Medal of Honor" in either World War, Gabaldon said. "I think it was blatant discrimination by the Marine Corps." Since then, 37 Latinos have received the Medal of Honor for bravery in combat in all branches of the service, but Gabaldon, though nominated in 1944, has yet to be chosen. Limon says that is an injustice, especially because Gabaldon used wiles, rather than weapons, to take his prisoners.

"He used their own language and he didn't kill them," Limon said. "In the process, he saved the lives of the Japanese but also probably thousands of GIs who would have had to face them in battle."

Workbook Editor's Notes:

I included this story because it shows how even under extreme circumstances the power of communication can transform a situation. This is a complex story for many reasons, one of which is that Gabaldon used deception, coercion, compassion and truthfulness all at the same time! I would not recommend that anyone lie or threaten others with injury, but I am not in a battle zone, and since the conduct of war almost always includes deception, Gabaldon would probably have deceived these same soldiers in the course of trying to kill them, if that had been his goal.

My feeling about this story is that by living with a Japanese family, Gabaldon not only learned to speak Japanese, he probably also learned to see and to love Japanese people (his adopted family) as real people. That made him willing to risk his own life to save the lives of the Japanese soldiers (who were probably seen by the other American soldiers as only "the enemy"). Why did the Japanese soldiers believe him? His sincere concern for them might have been expressed in his bizarre behavior (going out alone to talk with them) and in his tone of voice, which is something that would have been difficult to fake, and difficult to adopt as a mere strategy.

One lesson that I draw from this story is that making peace demands more skill and mental effort than making war. Another is that more things are possible than we usually imagine. What lessons do you draw from this story?

Perspectives on the power of communication – Reading 7-3:

What Kind of Person am I Becoming?
What Kind of People are We Becoming Together?

by Dennis Rivers, MA (May 2001 Revision)

The journey toward compassionate skill

Over the past decade I have taught a series of courses in communication skills to groups of university students who were about to volunteer in social service agencies, prisons, county jails, and juvenile halls. We have focused on topics such as the power of supportive listening and how we come to know ourselves better in the process of explaining our experiences to someone. In their role as peer mentors they will be both using their communication skills and encouraging their mentored companions to develop better ways of communicating their way through everyday conflicts. The focus of my course is pragmatic rather than psychological or philosophical: how to listen more empathetically and express oneself more competently.

There are, however, larger issues connected with interpersonal communication and subtle but important transactions going on between coach and trainee, between the giver of support and the receiver of support. I would like to be able to tell my students, all of them headed toward challenging encounters, just what these issues are, but it has taken longer than I imagined to put these issues into words. In this essay, I will be exploring how the way we talk and listen is related to the way we live, so that coaching a person to communicate differently is at the same time inviting a person to live differently.

To give just one preliminary example of what I'm talking about, one of the largest issues in moment-to-moment interpersonal communication is that many people do not express their thoughts, feelings and wants very clearly, perhaps out of fear of rejection. That vagueness prevents people from getting their needs met. But this particular issue, that surfaces in conversational coaching, is also, on a larger scale, the main issue addressed by Rogerian psychotherapy: that in hopes of winning the approval of others, we learn to present a stance to the world that can be totally disconnected from our own deepest feelings (our "organismic experiencing," in Rogers' terms), with which we may have lost touch altogether. In this light you can see that something sounding as simple as "communicating your needs more clearly" can have several levels of significance in a person's life.

In the course of teaching communication skills, I have tried to make the subject easy to grasp by keeping the focus on short-term goals. There are many helpful books that do the same. But the communication training encounter is also an encounter of persons exploring more satisfying ways of becoming persons together. The challenge for me as a trainer is to get people engaged and motivated at both levels. In this essay I concentrate on our desire to unfold as persons, and our urges to become more fully human.

Motivations for learning new communication skills

My experience has been that what brings most people to communication classes is usually an immediate need to have more satisfying conversations with a particular person or in a particular setting. These reasons are perfectly good ones as far as they go, but they are often not very deep or long-term. The problem here is that developing one's speaking, listening, questioning, reflecting and negotiating skills takes a fair amount of effort. In my view, the short term motivations that people bring to the process may not keep them involved long enough for them to reach their goals. No one expects to become an athlete or a violinist in a single weekend, but many people hope to make major improvements in their communication style with a minimum investment of time and effort, only to be disappointed at the meager results.

What seems to be needed in communication training are motivations that are deeper and perhaps encompass entire seasons of a person's life, or perhaps one's entire life. Whenever we find examples of high competence and excellence in human life, we also find examples of deep, long-term motivations. I fully encourage (almost) all of my students' pragmatic motivations. But in order to get my students inspired with more of the motivation they will need to reach their competence goals, I have begun to introduce them to such life-long questions as:

- "What kind of person do I want to become?" (or, alternatively, "Who's life inspires me?")
- "What kind of person do I enjoy being?"
- "How can I deepen my relationships with the important people in my life, *how can we nurture the life that lives between us?*"
- "What kind of world do I want to create with my conversations and actions"

These are tough questions but they are also powerful questions. They challenge a person to develop more inner and relational goals, rather than being only outer-directed by the immediate needs of coping with work and family situations. Again, I am not saying that there is anything bad about such immediate goals and I do everything within my power to help people reach them. My only reservation about these goals is that they may not be energizing enough to provide for their own fulfillment.

What I propose, both to my students and to you, my reader, is that developing better communication skills can be a central way of becoming more of the person one wants to be, and creating more of the world one wants to create. To explain this idea, I will first explore some of the things we mean when we say someone is a "person." Then I will present a kind of synthesis of what many deep thinkers have agreed are the qualities of personhood toward which we are all growing (some of us more willingly than others). From there I will present five arguments suggesting that our personhood emerges largely in and through our conversations, which means that we can have some influence over how we develop as persons. Finally I will discuss some of the formidable challenges we face in trying to steer both our conversations and our lives toward the qualities-in-action that make all of us more fully human.

Three meanings of personhood

While legal personhood is something we achieve simply by the fact of being born in a particular country, psychological or familial personhood seems to me to be much more like a set of muscles. Our psychological personhood grows by being exercised in the classic human relationships: parent, child, sibling, friend, enemy, coworker, supervisor, teacher and student. And within these relationships it is exercised primarily in an ongoing stream of interpersonal encounters that include talking, listening, fighting, cooperating, making and keeping commitments, turning our experiences into coherent stories, and so on. Just as a baby struggles to stand up, we all struggle to develop the awareness and skill that will allow us to function fully as a person among persons. While both the U.S. Declaration of Independence and the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights assert that we are all born with certain inalienable rights, unfortunately we are not born with the skills we need to exercise those rights wisely or the skills we need to make a happy life with others. We start out with a big gap between rights and capabilities.

Discussions about being a person can be confusing because they can mix together several different meanings of "person," especially:

- the unfinished and evolving personhood of family, psychology and literature,
- the already achieved personhood of law ("You are a citizen.") and
- the already achieved personhood religion ("You are a person because God created you with an immortal soul").

With each of these meanings we offer respect to other people and we ask for respect from them. In my experience all three of these meanings offer something special and worth pondering, but no one of these meanings is a very good substitute for either of the other two. For example, one may be able to fulfill many of the requirements of being a citizen (for example, don't steal, pay your taxes, vote, etc.) without being a very well-developed person (for example, being a friend to your friends in times of trouble, being an influence for reconciliation when conflicts arise, etc.).

This sorting out of meanings is necessary in order to make a kind of separate and accepting mental space for our perpetual un-finished-ness as persons, to disentangle the "already given" from the "continuously created." To say that we are continually learning, growing and evolving as persons is not to say that we are less than full citizens (or that we are less than children of God, for those who think in religious terms). While being less than a full citizen would be an insult to one's dignity, to be a not-yet-fully-completed person is simply to be human like everyone else. Each season of life offers us a different set of lessons and skills to learn. (I thought a lot about this a few years ago when I became like a parent to my frail and elderly father.) The fact that being a person is an ongoing process of *becoming* makes it possible to live hopefully: no matter how we may have succeeded or failed in the past, each day allows us to start over with a new set of challenges.

The possibilities of personhood

At this point you may be starting to feel, "Enough with these abstractions! If life is a process of becoming, *what is it that we are trying to become?*" To provide a working answer to that question I offer you the following list of the qualities of what one might call a "fully developing" person. This list is drawn from many sources, ancient and modern, among which there is actually a lot of agreement. You will recognize the influence of Jesus, St. Paul and St. Francis on this list, along with Carl Rogers, Abraham Maslow, Martin Buber, Erik Erikson, Rom Harré, and Gautama Buddha. In compiling this synthesis, it has helped me a great deal to think often in terms of styles of engaged action (such as "honestly" and "compassionately") rather than only in terms of fixed qualities of character (such as "honest" or "compassionate").

Thus translated into adverbs (and grouped into related clusters), we can say that at every stage along life's way we are challenged to act (and converse with one another)...

... more awarely (of self, other and context)
... more skillfully, competently and wisely
... more honestly, sincerely, genuinely, congruently (inner matches outer)
... more caringly, compassionately, acceptingly, respectfully, warmly, forgivingly
... more creatively and "exploratorily" (with more creative openness to new experience)
... more courageously, hopefully and faithfully
... more generously and nurturingly, delighting in the happiness of others
... more meaningfully and expressively, organizing and expressing our experiences in coherent patterns of words, music, movement and imagery
... more gratefully and appreciatively, open to delight
... more engagingly, energetically and responsively
... more gracefully and beautifully (in the Navajo sense of beauty as cosmic harmony)

It is interesting to note that, along with overlapping and interweaving, all these qualities of action are open-ended. There is no limit to any of them. No matter how much we had achieved in any of them, creativity, for example, we would want to go on and develop more. For another example: because there is no upper bound to kindness, I imagine that most people who are very kind would not admit to being so, but might admit that they were "growing toward kindness along with all of us."

Every now and then you will meet someone who embodies the opposite of many of these qualities (fearful, miserly, hostile, resentful). What you will notice about such people is that they are usually also very unhappy and isolated. I am not arguing here that we should practice these styles of action in order to be "good" as defined by some external authority. That would imply that if we could get away from the all-seeing eye of that authority, we could just relax and go back to being deceptive and resentful. I am arguing instead that *these qualities appear to be the inherent directions of human fulfillment.* They are our own built-in recipe for becoming fully human persons. Where this recipe originally came from I will leave to theologians and evolutionary biologists, who have filled many volumes discussing the source of human virtues. The unfolding of these qualities in people seems equally miraculous to me, whether I think of these qualities as the flowering of a billion years of evolution or as the gradual revelation of God's presence in our own hearts.

Wherever these qualities have come from, what is clear to me is that *these are the qualities of successful and complex long-term human cooperation.* And successful cooperation means better survival for the group that practices it, although the emergence of successful cooperation is not at all automatic. It is not like growing hair. It is much more like searching for food, a process which, although it has life and death biological significance, may or may not be fully realized. Consider for a moment that the speech folds of our brains contain no specific language when we are born, but await completion from human culture. In a similar way, our capacity to develop all the cooperation-facilitating qualities-in-action just listed awaits actualization in nurturing families, schools and cultures. *(That is what communication training is about: to improve the chances that people will be able to cooperate with one another to meet life's challenges.)*

Following in the very large footsteps of Abraham Maslow and Carl Rogers, I believe that each human being is born with both a capacity and a gentle yearning to grow in these many directions: toward awareness, caring, creativity and so on. The more actions we perform that express these qualities, the more we have feelings of coherence, community, integrity, and well-being. We like ourselves more. The fewer of these kinds of actions we perform the more we have feelings of fragmentation, alienation, self-dislike, and perhaps numbness. Unfortunately, our "gentle yearning" to grow in these directions is easily overruled by harsh circumstances. Thus we need to work together to nurture those impulses in ourselves and others and so create a social world that feels good to live in.

Focusing on the qualities-in-action that I have compiled into the list presented above is one possible context for understanding *where are we going and what are we doing together*.

The story of my life, in this context, becomes the story of my journey into awareness, kindness, insight, courage, and so on, perhaps as exemplified by the heroes and archetypes of my culture.

And my deepest way of relating to you is to encourage your development in these directions, first by my own embodiment of these qualities, and second by becoming your companion on this journey of development. Such companionship, whether in parenting, friendship or psychotherapy, contains a powerful creative tension between, on one side, a vision of and a hope for the best that you can become, and, on the other side, a profound acceptance and forgiveness of all the trial and error along the way. We give and receive crucial forms of this kind of developmental encouragement in conversation: receiving the story of another person's struggles and sharing the story one's own successes and failures.

Seven arguments in favor of the centrality of conversation in human development

At his point you might quite reasonably be thinking, "Well, that we should all strive to act in ways that are more aware, caring and skillful is a nice idea but not a new one, and furthermore, what do these various noble qualities have to do with communication?" The answer that I offer to this question is already implied in the last few paragraphs. As I see it, *the world of conversation between us is a uniquely important and available arena in which to adopt more of these qualities.* Since this is a weighty proposition, allow me to present several arguments that support it.

First of all, it is in our conversations that we rehearse our actions. Therefore, the more skillful and creative our rehearsals, the better our actual performances will be. If we can't imagine doing something, we probably won't be able to do it. Conversations, both inner and outer, are where we do most of this essential imagining ("I wonder what would happen if I..."). So the qualities of our conversations spill over into our actions, for better or for worse, which we then remember as part of our life story, which is an important component of our personhood. Our actions and society's reaction to them become a significant part of our personhood. (Rob a bank and you've just transformed yourself into a "bank robber.") We become the qualities of what we do, after we talk ourselves into doing it, or don't talk ourselves *out* of doing it.

Second, conversation itself is an action, and it is the context in which we both encounter essential human tasks and practice many significant human virtues (understood as qualities of action). For example, major forms of honesty, kindness, awareness, and creativity are utterly conversational. To begin with the first of these, one of the primary forms of honesty concerns speaking truthfully in conversations with others. "Thou shalt not lie." This is not a warm-up for some other more fundamental virtue, this is a virtue itself that lives (or dies) in conversation. For another example, think of the kindness involved in listening supportively to a friend who is going through some great trial, perhaps having just learned of the death of a loved one. The kindness of listening caringly is not some lesser kindness, some practice for the real thing that will come later. This conversational kindness is the real thing.

Continuing with the qualities that I noted at the beginning of this paragraph, if we look at awareness as a virtue, we see that our horizon of awareness is shaped by the possibilities allowed by our vocabulary and grammar, which are elaborated in our conversations. It's hard to pay attention to something until we have a conversationally-transmitted word for it. With regard to creativity as a virtue, stringing words together into unique sequences is one of the primary forms of human creativity, and a form that nurtures many other non-linguistic forms of creativity. My illustrations could be expanded to show how all the other qualities-in-action I have listed (hopefully, courageously, beautifully, etc.) find a major form of expression in conversation.

Third, we use conversation both to assert ourselves and to commune with others, the essential tasks of human development. According to the developmental psychologist Robert Kegan,[37] two overarching tasks, *communion and assertion*, stand out as being equally at the core of a fully human life, Communion means understanding, empathizing with and nurturing the people around us. Assertion includes our ability to press for the fulfillment of our own needs and our gradually unfolding ability to conceive of and guide our own lives. Although Kegan does not especially emphasize conversation as a central part of the developmental process, conversing is the main way most people assert themselves and commune with others. The conclusion I draw from Kegan's work is that the way we learn to converse, clearly or confusedly, creatively or dully, compassionately or demeaningly, will have a giant impact on how well or how poorly we accomplish the central tasks of personhood he describes.

Fourth, conversations are small enough units of behavior that we can, with effort, steer them toward the qualities we want to embody. It is very difficult to make direct changes in one's character or overall attitudes, but conversations provide us with endless opportunities to move in positive directions. The adverbial qualities of our conversations (wisely, honestly, awarely, acceptingly, etc.) become the adjectival qualities of our character (wise, aware, accepting, etc.). The qualities-in-action adverbs are a sort of gentle "on-ramp" of personal character: conversations are an accessible starting place for working on the kind of persons we would like to become, one that allows us to begin again and again. The same can be said for communing and asserting. We learn to balance these competing pulls one conversation at a time.

Fifth, we use conversational storytelling to recognize ourselves and others as persons to be loved and protected, or as objects to be used and broken. This is true throughout life, from the baby's emerging sense of self-and-other that grows out of the gradually unfolding mother-infant dialogue, to the mythic themes that peoples and nations use to define themselves in relation to other peoples and nations. We have been told many times that words are not objects or people, but merely words. That is true as far as it goes, but I submit to you that such understanding does not go far enough. A lot of current thinking and research suggests that how well we recognize others as people depends on our memories of nurturing conversations, the richness or poverty of our vocabulary of experience, the labels we are taught to use, and how we use that vocabulary and labeling to weave our experiences and expectations of others into coherent stories shared and reinforced in further conversation.

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[37] Robert Kegan. *The Evolving Self: Problem and Process in Human Development.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press. 1982

The war that accompanied the breakup of the former Yugoslavia provides a tragic example of this story-making at work. Both the Serbs and the Croats used stories of World War Two atrocities to whip up hatred against the other side. This created a coherent context in which new atrocities could be committed in the name of just revenge. Such processes of demonizing and vilifying are strongly rooted in conversation and storytelling, as are the processes of honoring and appreciating.

Because we use story-making and story-sharing to organize our experience of other people and define our relationship to others, we are especially vulnerable to manipulative story-tellers, whether they are advertisers, cult gurus, or demagogic politicians. The story that I tell you to express and justify how I see other people is an important part of "me," my personhood, as we all realize when we meet someone on the street who is convinced that half the people in town are malevolent agents from outer space. How different this is from the "all children of the same loving God" theme elaborated by The Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr., and what a different sense of "me" this latter theme evokes. The qualities of these kinds of conversations both reflect and create the qualities of our lives.

Sixth, conversations are the primary medium through which we heal the emotional wounds of living. As Judith Viorst so eloquently states in her book, *Necessary Losses*,[38] even in a life full of advantages and good health, every step of human development is accompanied by and catalyzed by deep experiences of loss. We leave the womb to gain the world. We raise our kids only to have them leave home just about the time when they could become our friends. By the time we reach middle age and can truly understand our parents, our parents often die, leaving us with a complex burden of grief at the loss and gratitude for life, fragile and finite though it is.

In addition to these sufferings that are built into life, many lives, perhaps most, are marked by some degree of trauma and deprivation. Several of my close friends, for example, had in childhood a parent who was mentally ill or a violent alcoholic. Other friends participated in the Vietnam war, to their eternal regret. And for others, who protested the war, the Vietnam war era was so disorienting that they lost confidence in being able to have a normal life of fulfillment in family and work. I want to make two points here that are unpopular in an optimistic culture: first, that life includes suffering, and second, that much of the suffering and loss in life has nothing to do with our misbehavior (although it is also true that we can cause our-selves enormous suffering). That is to say, being wounded by life and learning to heal are central, inescapable parts of becoming a mature person. And, it is through many heartfelt *conversations* that we engage in this healing process, that we bring these painful experiences into focus and create a meaningful life story out of a seemingly random sequence of sorrows and disappointments. Sometimes these conversations are called, "psychotherapy," but even more often we call them "deep friendship" and "good parenting."

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[38] Judith Viorst. *Necessary Losses*. New York: Fawcett. 1986.

In all these contexts, according to Carl Rogers, healing conversations have the same qualities.[39] The helping partners in these dialogues communicate honestly, caringly, respectfully, understandingly, expressively, and in a way that is open to new experience. In the company of such supportive conversation partners we reconcile ourselves to the sorrows and losses in life, and find the strength to start over, to meet life anew. (Although it is certainly possible for many people heal their life wounds through art and dance, for most people the focus of emotional healing is in conversation. Even therapies centered in art, movement or music include the kinds of conversations just mentioned.)

Finally, seventh, there is a good deal of evidence to suggest that just plain thinking itself is internalized conversing. It is in the styles, themes and cognitive challenges of our conversations that we help our children learn to think. (The scholar I find most inspiring on this topic is Jerome Bruner.) While spatial perception and motor skills are absolutely essential dimensions of human development, the same must be said for conversation skills (which are usually referred to as the dis-embodied abstraction, "language"). Daily conversations challenge the growing child to perform ever larger and more complex feats of memory, logic, creativity, and understanding the experience of others. The sentence is the seed of the story, and the story is the seed of an autobiography: a story about myself and others that allows me to imagine my own life and thus think of myself as a person among persons.

The mind unfolds in conversation and story-telling, which remain major forms of mental exercise throughout life. But not only do we learn to think and imagine in conversation, *we learn to think and imagine in a particular personal style* shown to us by our earliest caregivers. Appreciatively or resentfully, hopefully or cynically, honestly or deceptively, creatively or routinely: our styles of making contact with one another and making sense of life are the gifts or curses we bestow upon our children. And it will be largely through their conversations that they will keep alive and deepen whatever style of thinking we have passed on to them.

Here, then, in recapitulation, are my seven arguments in favor of the proposition that we become persons largely in and through our conversations with others (and with ourselves, also, after we have absorbed early in life a large amount of conversational interaction):

1) In conversations we conceive and rehearse the important actions of our lives, including cooperation with others.

2) In conversation we can embody all the fundamental human virtues (or faults).

3) We use conversation both to assert ourselves and to commune with others, which are the two essential tasks of human development.

4) Conversations allow us to approach and practice all those virtues and tasks in small steps.

5) In conversations we learn and put into action our understanding of ourselves and others as persons to be loved and protected or as objects to be used and broken.

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[39] Carl R. Rogers, *On Becoming a Person: A Therapist's View of Psychotherapy*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin. 1995.

6) Conversations are the primary medium through which we heal the emotional wounds of living.

7) In conversation we learn and renew our fundamental style of thinking.

In light of these seven arguments, it is a mistake to imagine that our "real" life takes place beyond all words, and we then have "mere" conversations about it, as if life and conversation were two were separate circles. A truer picture, I believe, would be to locate the conversation circle *inside* the life circle. Our conversations are real life activities, as real as running or swimming or planting food.

For me, these seven arguments are deeply important because they all imply that by improving the way we talk and listen we can create gentle waves of change in both our relationships with other people and our inner relationship with ourselves. In much the same way that the smallest part of a fern has the same shape as the entire fern branch, the moment of conversation holds the shape of a lifetime. Although from the "whole life" perspective we can speak of moments combining to make a life story, the whole giving meaning to each of the parts, this point of view can tend to devalue each moment. From the "eternal moment" perspective, our lives unfold one moment at a time and *the quality we give our present moment is the quality of our life.* The life we are given is given to us one moment at a time. Therefore we would live more fulfilling lives if we cultivated each moment (and each conversation) as an enormous opportunity to live more awarely, com-passionately, courageously, appreciatively, and so on. (I advocate using both of these points of view, the whole life and the eternal moment, and alternating between them, as a way of thinking about one's life.)

Because we converse with one another day in and day out, it is easy lose track of how significant all these individual moments and everyday conversations are in our journey of becoming. I hope the arguments I have just presented will inspire you to *see the familiar as strange*, to see your everyday conversations as full of wonderful possibilities. No matter where we find ourselves on the spectrum of development, I believe, *each of us was born to embody all these qualities-in-action and the capacity to grow more fully in these directions lies within each of us at every moment.*

Challenges we face in striving to become more fully human

That we have within us these wonderful capacities does not mean that it will be easy to develop them. Having brain folds for speech does not automatically provide us with language, and being born with lots of muscle cells does not provide us with fully-formed muscles. Similarly, my experience has been that developing more of these inherently human qualities and nurturing them in others is the most challenging task in a human life. (I actually believe that task is what we are here for.) So in concluding this essay, allow me to share with you what I see as some of the most significant challenges and barriers to this kind of human development and possible responses to those challenges.

THE MOMENTUM OF THE OLD WAYS. First of all, however we talk, listen, interrupt, fight, nurture and/or demean one another has a great amount of psychological 'momentum' behind it. We have been practicing doing it that way for a long time. We identify with our current conversation style as an important part of our being. And the style connects us to the people who taught us to talk this way (usually our parents). Not all of this momentum is bad. If we did not have some established patterns of our own we would be led astray by the first pied piper or cult guru who passed through town. But the momentum of the styles we learned as children and developed up to now can keep us trapped in ways of relating that need changing, that will never bring us any real fulfillment or happiness. For me, the answer to this problem is not to try forcibly to break a person's identification with his or her present pattern, as is the case in Marine boot camp, cult indoctrination and some drug treatment programs. From my perspective that still leaves a person completely other-directed, without an inner compass to follow. For me the answer to the problem of momentum *is to raise the issue of momentum*, to challenge people to wrestle with that issue consciously and to choose consciously the people they want to emulate, the heroes they want to follow and the qualities they want to embody.

THE MENTAL WORKOUT OF PAYING ATTENTION. Second of all, aside from the effort it might take to change our ways of communicating, it takes a considerable amount of mental effort just to focus one's attention on conversations and the qualities they express. In contrast to an object or a single event, each conversation is like a little novel: a complex sequence of events, each one of which is meaningful because of its relationship to all the others. As each new conversational event takes place, we have to imagine the many possible meanings it might have in relation to the various conversational and life events that came before it. Beyond the mental workout demanded by the need to remember and interweave long sequences of actions, paying conscious attention to the qualities of those action sequences requires that we exercise our capacities for abstract thought and self-observation. Forewarned of these mental demands, we can develop more realistic expectations and make a place for more practice in our lives (more discussions, support groups, long talks, less TV).

THE TENSION AMONG HUMAN VIRTUES. A third challenge is that many of the qualities-in-action that make us most fully human are in deep and creative tension with one another. For example, while we are told from an early age both to be kind and to tell the truth, it takes years of practice to learn how to bring both these qualities into the same encounter. The same can be said for the many problem-solving situations in life that require us to think both honestly *and* creatively. The developmental theorist Robert Kegan has gone so far as to describe the human personality as, figuratively speaking, stretched into existence by the tension between our need to commune with others and our equally strong need to assert ourselves. It appears that our personhood is like a living fabric which grows by being simultaneously pulled strongly in many directions. Knowing that our development will be a challenging balancing act rather than a placid flowering, we can adopt a more forgiving attitude toward the setbacks in our own development and the development of others.

RESISTING THE SHORT-TERM APPARENT BENEFITS OF DECEPTION AND COERCION. A fourth challenge might be called, "the eternal temptations." In the course of living, it often seems much easier to tell less than the whole truth, both to others and to ourselves. It also can seem much easier to try to get what we want by threatening other people rather than by negotiating with them and honoring their needs. While lying, self-deception and bullying may give a person some momentary advantages, relying on such maneuvers will make it impossible to form long-term relationships of trust and cooperation. And the lack of such warm, supportive relationships is one of the deepest wounds a person can experience. If we deceive or bully our friends and partners in life, we soon will not have any friends or partners. The sooner in life we figure this out, the better off we will be, but resisting these temptations is a deep lesson and we may or may not get the help we need to learn it.

One measure of a culture is how it helps its members outgrow these temptations by developing a long-term sense of relationship-building and community-building, how it helps its members make the journey from coercing to cooperating. Since most societies rely on quite a bit of coercion to maintain social order we are, in general, more likely to learn how to obey than how to cooperate. This leads us to the final challenge in my list...

AN ENVIRONMENT HOSTILE TO PERSONHOOD. To me, a fifth challenge to our development as persons comes from the particular social world in which we live. Although our fulfillment as persons may depend on our cultivation of the qualities-in-action I described in the opening pages of this paper, the society we live in may not want its members to be all that aware, honest, creative or courageous. Consider, for example, the social pressure during almost a century of American history (1776-1860) for many Americans to ignore the glaring contradiction between the institution of slavery and the national ideal that "all men are created equal." Or consider the pressure on ordinary Germans to look the other way as their supposedly refined and highly civilized nation descended into bloodshed and madness. Or contemplate the current culture of violence-as-entertainment, which, in countless movies, books and video games, celebrates and idealizes cruelty, injury and murder, making kindness more and more unthinkable.

As Arno Gruen points out in *The Insanity of Normality,*[40] our struggle for integrity is often, unfortunately, partly a struggle against the socially accepted world around us. Following Gruen, I see us encountering this taken-for-granted insanity in many forms: as lying bosses, alcoholic parents, dramatized murder as daily entertainment, programs to build weapons of mass destruction that are really collective suicide devices, and state governments that supposedly save their citizens' money by running lotteries that take even more money from those same citizens, to name only a few of many issues that come to mind. In terms of living more honestly and awarely, and developing more of all the other qualities-in-action I have discussed in this essay, one would have to admit that we are surrounded by bad examples

If and when we numb ourselves enough to blot all of this out of awareness, we numb ourselves enough to lose track of our own lives, the very lives we were hoping to protect and cultivate. If we could consciously acknowledge that some aspects of our world are going to be hostile to our fulfillment as persons, we might be able to find healthier ways of protecting ourselves. (Spending less time in front of the TV and more time in nature with friends and family, for example.) Becoming a person would be a challenge even if we did not have large companies offering us 24-hour-a-day kick boxing to stir us up and alcohol to calm us down, an endless stream of large-screen bad news to depress us and then Prozac to cheer us up. Between the blind faith that everything is all right, and the paranoia that the world is out to injure and destroy us, lies the realistic acknowledgment that we will probably not get much help in becoming persons from the dominant institutions of our culture. This realistic disappointment could bear good fruit. We might get more actively involved both in creating the life and personhood we want to live and creating the kind of world in which we would like to live it.

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[40] Arno Gruen, *The insanity of normality: Realism as sickness - Toward understanding human destructiveness.* New York: Grove Press. 1992.

Conclusion

As much as the seven arguments presented in the middle of this paper have convinced me that we become persons largely in and through the qualities of our communication with others, these last five considerations just given convince me with equal force that steering one's conversations and one's life toward genuineness, creativity, compassion, etc., will probably never be easy. But this struggle is what will allow us to feel more fully alive and more deeply human. The good news is that we can approach all the virtues of full humanness one conversation at a time. Our lives are, among other things, a series of conversations, and therein lies one of the most significant doorways to personal development. We vote with each conversation, both for what kind of person we want to become, and (to borrow a phrase from Ram Dass) for what kind of world we ourselves want to live in.

Your notes on these readings:

Appendix One

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY
GREAT BOOKS ON INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION

Here are some excellent books on interpersonal communication and relationship building. These books are the source of much of the material in this workbook. You are invited to find these great books at your local library, order them from your favorite bookstore (using the ISBN number given for each), or order them from the Cooperative Communication book link at www.coopcomm.org.

How to Talk So Kids Will Listen & Listen So Kids Will Talk by Adele Faber and Elaine Mazlish. New York: Avon Books. 1980. A book for parents and anyone wanting to improve their communication with kids. Full of wonderfully informative cartoon sequences illustrating the major points. (Price: appx. $12.50. ISBN: 0380570009. Order from your favorite local bookstore or from www.coopcomm.org)

The Talk Book: The Intimate Science of Communicating in Close Relationships, by Gerald Goodman and Glen Esterly. Emmaus, PA: Rodale Press. 1988. This book presents Goodman's vision of the six most important "Talk Tools." His chapters include lively transcripts of phone conversations showing exactly how the "Talk Tools" can help. The principles discussed are applied in both work and family contexts. Includes a great reference section that will introduce you to the most interesting and promising work in the area of interpersonal communication studies. (Look for this book at your local library or order from UCLA Academic Publishing Service at (310) 825-2831. Price: $20.50, postage included.)

Getting to Yes: Negotiating Agreement Without Giving In (2nd ed.), by Roger Fisher, William Ury and Bruce Patton. New York: Penguin Books. 1991. If these folks did not invent the idea of "win-win" solutions, they deserve credit for popularizing it around the world. They propose that by understanding your own long-term interests better and by understanding your bargaining opponent's long-term interests, you can work toward agreements in which everyone gets more of what they want and need. These kinds of agreements take more work to create but they are more likely to last than simple "split the difference" compromises. A great introduction to negotiation with examples from business and politics. According to John Kenneth Galbraith, "This is by far the best thing I've ever read about negotiation. It is equally relevant for ... individual[s] who would like to keep [their] friends, property, and income and [diplomats] who would like to keep the peace." (Price: appx. $13.00. ISBN: 0140157352. Order from your favorite local bookstore or from www.coopcomm.org)

MESSAGES: The Communication Skills Book by Matthew McKay, Martha Davis and Patrick Fanning. Oakland: New Harbinger. 1983. This book is an easy-to-read but comprehensive introduction to the many-faceted process of interpersonal communication at home and at work. Among the many topics it introduces, it includes chapters on self-expression, fighting fairly, assertiveness and negotiation. (Price: appx. $14.00. ISBN: 1572240229. Order from your favorite local bookstore or from www.coopcomm.org)

The Heart of Parenting - How to Raise an Emotionally Intelligent Child, by John M. Gottman with Joan DeClaire. New York: Simon & Schuster. 1997. This book explores Gottman's vision of "emotion coaching," a process through which parents help their children observe and guide their own emotional responses. Drawing on two ten-year studies of more than 120 families, Gottman explains how children who learn to acknowledge and master their emotions are more self-confident as well as physically healthier. They also do better in school and are more likely to grow into emotionally healthy adults. (Price: appx. $22.00. ISBN: 0-684-80130-2. Order from your favorite local bookstore or from www.coopcomm.org)

Straight Talk by Sherod Miller, Daniel Wackman, Elam Nunnally and Carol Saline. New York: Signet Books. 1982. Reading this book is like going to a week-long seminar. It will give you a thorough introduction to a pioneering communications training program created at the University of Minnesota. Uses the "awareness wheel" model to encourage people to understand themselves better and express themselves more clearly. (Look for this book at your local library.)

Do I Have To Give Up Me To Be Loved By You? by Jordan and Margaret Paul. Minneapolis: CompCare Publishers. 1983. This book is built around the concept of courageous honesty and the psychological insight that, in order to feel close, partners need to tell one another the truth about what they are thinking and feeling. According to the Pauls, the peace that a couple buys by avoiding difficult issues will eventually destroy the relationship they hope to protect. (Price: appx. $15.00. ISBN: 1568380682. Order from your favorite local bookstore or www.coopcomm.org)

On Becoming a Person: A Therapist's View of Psychotherapy, by Carl R. Rogers. Boston: Houghton Mifflin. 1995. A classic (first published in 1961), scholarly but very readable book on the challenges of becoming a more authentic person who is open to new experience. Rogers was a pioneer advocate of the healing power of supportive listening in both psychotherapy and everyday life. His most revolutionary idea was that the therapist did not have to 'fix' the client; if the therapist simply provided a deeply accepting environment and LISTENED, the client's own sense of inner rightness would come into play and guide the client to find a solution that was right for him/her. (Price: appx. $15.00. ISBN: 039575531X. Order from your favorite local bookstore or www.coopcomm.org)

Nonviolent Communication: A Language of Compassion, by Marshall B. Rosenberg. (Del Mar, CA: PuddleDancer Press. 1998.) This book presents Rosenberg's vision of empathic communication and the four essential messages that we need to express so that other people can understand what we are experiencing. These same four elements are what we need to listen for in order to understand other people (and ourselves) better. One reader wrote: "A clinical psychologist who studied with Carl Rogers, Dr. Rosenberg pulls together in lucid, flowing prose, information from many respected sources on the art and science of the practical use of language in creating empathy and human connection. Beautifully written in language that demonstrates his compassion." Marshall Rosenberg's book and workshops were the inspiration for Challenge Three in this workbook. (Price: appx. $16.00. ISBN: 1880396408. Order from your favorite local bookstore or www.coopcomm.org)

Love & Survival: The Scientific Basis for the Healing Power of Intimacy, by Dean Ornish, M.D. (New York: HarperCollins. 1998. As of 10/98 only available in hardback.) If you are wondering about how much energy to put into close, nurturing relationships, this book will provide you with a mountain of amazing evidence that supportive relationships make a life and death difference in people's lives. As Dr. Andrew Weil comments, "This is the most important book ever written about love and health." (List price, $25.00, hardback (actual price varies because this is a popular book.) ISBN: 0060172134. Order from your favorite local bookstore or www.coopcomm.org)

To Love and Be Loved, by Sam Keen. New York: Bantam Books. 1997. With the wisdom that comes from much thought and many struggles, Keen carefully examines the many distinct strands of feeling that we weave together into our experience of loving. "In the depths of our being, in body, mind, and spirit, we know intuitively that we are created to love and be loved, and that fulfilling this imperative, responding to this vocation, is the central meaning of our life." (Price: appx. $22.00. ISBN: 0-553-08904-8. Order from your favorite local bookstore or www.coopcomm.org)

Appendix Two

SUGGESTIONS FOR STARTING A COOPERATIVE COMMUNICATION SKILLS PEER SUPPORT GROUP

About Peer Support Groups

You are invited to start your own local Peer Support Group to practice the skills described in the Seven Challenges Workbook. Such a group could be located at work, at home or as part of the public service activity of a community service organization or religious congregation.

The Support Group Network is an informal association of people who are studying The Seven Challenges Workbook, and who are helping one another and their communities in whatever ways feel life-enhancing and appropriate. We stay in touch through the free, e-mail Journal of Cooperative Communication Skills (that you can subscribe to at www.coopcomm.org).

Why Participate?

In life it is generally true that the happiness, skill and fulfillment a person gets out of an activity depends on the love, effort and attention the person puts into it. This is deeply true when it comes to learning new communication skills. One of the most powerful ways to help yourself learn is to help others learn. In practicing with, observing and coaching others you can develop a new level of awareness about what unfolds between people in conversation and in conflict. You can then use this awareness every day to guide your own communicating toward greater success, reconciliation and fulfillment.

Peer support helps people develop by focusing on three elements: the time people are capable of giving, the effort people are capable of making, and the clarity and availability of teaching materials; rather than on the money people are capable of spending and the talent or charisma of trainers. Current practices in communication training tend toward brief, expensive, seminars and high-priced professional coaching. These arrangements have two major drawbacks: They exclude many people who could benefit from exploring new ways of communicating. And they do not address the longer term needs of communication skill learners. New communication skills evolve over months and years of practice. People learning new ways of listening and speaking need:

- ongoing practice partnerships
- opportunities to grow in awareness through observing and coaching
- support for practicing new skills by belonging to an extended practice community

Peer practice groups using the freely available (via the web) Seven Challenges Workbook represent an alternative path to communication skills learning in which everyone capable of making an effort can participate for extended periods of time. As co-learners, people can receive as much attention as they are willing to give. It represents the kind of extended practice support that every communication skills training program needs (but may not have). Participation in a local peer support network is an ideal follow-up activity for courses in businesses, schools, clinics, etc., that use The Seven Challenges Workbook

The lack of communication and conflict resolution skills has drastic consequences all through society. High school violence, workplace shootings and child abuse come to mind immediately as examples. Therefore it is in our own extended best interest to create learning environments that encourage wider rather than narrower participation. We serve ourselves by serving the world, at many different levels.

The suggested participant agreements listed on the following pages, like the rules of baseball, are intended to help people focus and coordinate their efforts. They are promises to oneself, one's teammates, and to the world in which we ourselves want to live happier lives. They were developed by Dennis Rivers after extensive discussions with teachers, therapists and potential peer support participants. Because peer support groups using the Seven Challenges Workbook are independent and self-governing, it is up to each group to decide what will best meet its needs. We hope you will consider the following four suggestions as a thoughtful starting place for developing the agreements that will define your particular peer support and learning group.

Four Suggested Agreements for Peer Support Groups

- In order to bring more fulfillment into our lives and more peace into the world, we commit ourselves to the ongoing study and practice of communicating more cooperatively, creatively, consciously, compassionately, courageously and successfully, at home, at work and in my community, using The Seven Challenges Workbook as one of our learning resources.

- In order to increase the amount of encouragement-toward-cooperation in the world, we agree to share our learning experiences, to the best of our ability, as a source of encouragement to others. [The success stories of our peers encourage and empower us in ways that are beyond the reach of even the best teachers and books. The Institute for Cooperative Communication Skills is committed to making communication success stories available for free around the world on the web.]

- In order to deepen our communication skills and to help build a more cooperative, less violent world, we each agree to help at least one other person study and practice The Seven Challenges Workbook curriculum, two hours a week, in one or more of the following co-learner roles:

  being a learning companion or "study buddy" for a single individual,

  starting and coordinating a study and practice group at home, at work, at school or in other appropriate community settings,

  supporting other group participants to develop both their personal communication skills and their mentoring abilities,

  presenting the Seven Challenges approach at meetings and conferences as an example of publicly-shared knowledge that is available to everyone,

  teaching introductory classes on a donation basis or through low-cost adult education programs (class participants may be charged for the cost of reproducing the Workbook and related class materials), and

  other public service activities appropriate to my life circumstances, such as volunteering in jails, prisons, juvenile detention facilities, hospitals, etc., or translating communication training materials into other languages.

- In order to bring both our communication learning and our life stories into better focus, we agree to keep personal journals of our thoughts, feelings, hopes, disappointments and experiments in living. [One of the most important aspects of journal writing is that we can only guide as much of our life and action as we can observe. If you are not familiar with journal writing, you might begin by writing letters about your life journey to real or imagined friends. Journal writing will give you a safe place in which to privately express, explore and clarify your feelings and wants before publicly expressing them. Also, learning to observe your life through journaling can help you learn to observe more of your moment-to-moment conversational inter-action.]

Suggested Next Steps in Peer Support Group Participation

Costs: Please make participation in your local Peer Support Group as inexpensive as possible by using community rooms in public libraries as meeting places. (The Seven Challenges Workbook and a large library of related study materials are available free of charge at www.coopcomm.org.)

How to stay in touch: In order to keep mailing costs down, please use e-mail to send and receive information from the Institute for Cooperative Communication Skills. Please be sure to subscribe to the peer support newsletter (by sending a blank email to peersupport@coopcomm.org) If you are not already a subscriber to the e-mail Journal of Cooperative Communication Skills, you will be entered as a subscriber when you subscribe to the peer support newsletter. Please write to us with your learning and volunteering experiences. You can reach Dennis Rivers, Director of the Institute for Cooperative Communication Skills, at (805) 565-4580. You can write to him at 801 Ladera Lane, Santa Barbara, CA 93101, USA.

How to get known in your community: You are welcome to develop your own local web site listing your activities, and develop you own e-mail lists. Many newspapers will list study and support group activities for free. As the encourager of the Peer Support Groups, The Institute for Cooperative Communication Skills strongly suggests that if you are going to make your name available to the general public, that you schedule meetings in public settings: library community rooms, restaurants or coffee shops for small groups, and bank or school community rooms for larger groups.

A note about paid teaching: Nothing in these commitments prevents a person from being paid for teaching services outside of the circle of their Peer Support activities. The Institute for Cooperative Communication Skills actively encourages anyone with the necessary experience and credentials to teach the Seven Challenges curriculum in schools, colleges, social service organizations, in-service training programs, and in psychotherapy and social work settings. The Institute supports this teaching with free training materials available around the world, but at the present time the Institute does not certify teachers.

Your Notes on This Topic

Appendix Three

ORDERING PRINTED COPIES OF THIS WORKBOOK, PERMISSION TO MAKE COPIES, INVITATIONS TO PARTICIPATE, ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS AND GIFTS

Ordering printed copies of this Workbook:

You can order printed copies of this workbook for US $14.00 each (plus shipping) from Trafford Publishers, both by phone and online. To order online, please visit:

www.coopcomm.org/orderbook

To order by phone from the US or Canada, dial 1-888-232-4444. From outside the US and Canada, dial 011-1-250-383-6864.

This workbook is a public service project of Dennis Rivers and the Institute for Cooperative Communication Skills, a consortium of parents, teachers and scholars (many members are all three). Because our goal is to distribute this information as widely and inexpensively as possible, all the chapters and readings in this Workbook are also available free of charge as pages on the World Wide Web at **www.coopcomm.org**. The workbook is also available online as a single document in PDF format.

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Invitations to participate from Dennis Rivers...

Please let me know your learning experiences with the Workbook. You can write to me at Cooperative Communication, c/o Dennis Rivers, 133 E. De la Guerra St., #PMB420, Santa Barbara, California 93101, USA, or you can send e-mail to *workbook @coopcomm.org* .

You are invited to subscribe to the free, e-mail *Journal of Cooperative Communication Skills* by sending a blank e-mail message to *subscribe@coopcomm.org* .

You are also invited to submit your learning experiences to the *Journal* by e-mailing them to us at *journal@coopcomm.org* . Using traffic analysis software, I have discovered that approximately 50,000 people a year from around the world find their way to the Cooperative Communication Workbook web site. So whatever contributions you make to the evolution of the Workbook will be shared with this wide and growing community.

Acknowledgements

Various aspects of this workbook were inspired by the lifelong work of Carl Rogers, Marshall Rosenberg, Richard Bandler, John Grinder, and Roy Shafer, to all of whom I am eternally grateful. I would also like to express my special appreciation to David Richo and Sam Keen for contributing deep exercises to this second edition of the Workbook. Many people have helped it to evolve. Cathy Holt, Belinda Day, Sharon Smallwood, Sandra Lewis, and the Rev. Dr. John Mabry have given many helpful suggestions. Gene Hoffman, Helen Meloy, Michael Bean, Edwin Shaw, Barnett Pearce, and Margaret Pavel have given me endless time and encouragement over the years. The Estates of Hector and Winnifred Tate provided extended financial support.

Your Gifts Make A Difference

As the author of this workbook, I gratefully accept gifts of any amount in support the continuing development and free distribution of the *Workbook,* a wide range of related teaching materials, and the permission to make copies of these for small-group, school and intra-organizational use. Every supporting gift makes a big difference. A ten-dollar gift, for example, can fund the free distribution of approximately one thousand copies of this workbook, often to schools and community service organizations that would not otherwise be able to provide such material to their students/participants. Please make your check or money order payable to Dennis Rivers and mail it to the address shown below. Thank you helping to make the workbook a global resource for better interpersonal communication.

Dennis Rivers
133 East De la Guerra St., #PMB 420
Santa Barbara, CA 93101 USA

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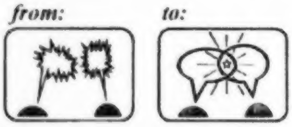

The Seven Challenges

A Workbook and Reader
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